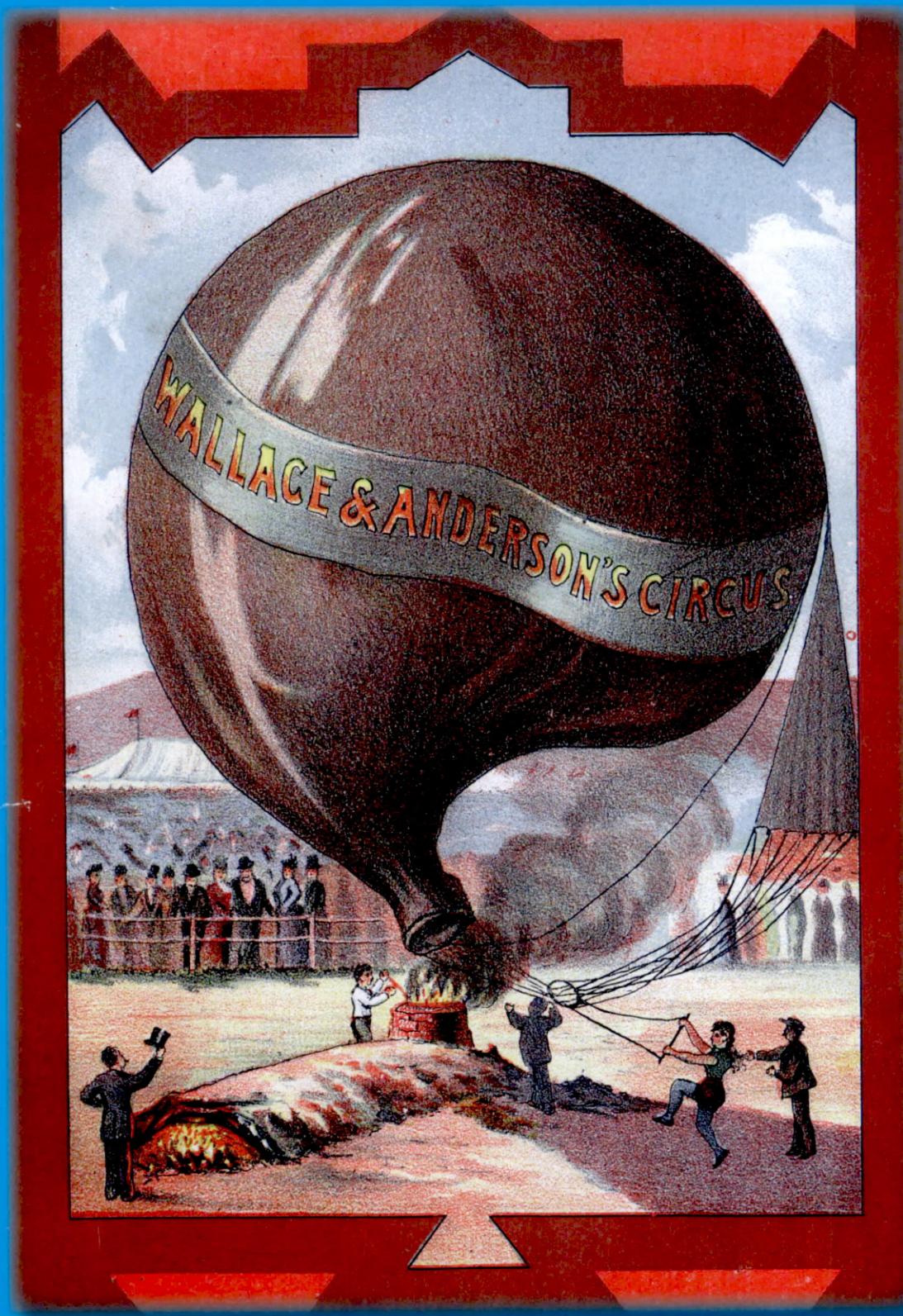


BANDWAGON

January-February 2013 • Volume 57 Number 1



BANDWAGON

The Journal of the Circus Historical Society, Inc.

January-February 2013 • Volume 57, Number 1

Fred D. Pfening III ← → Editor and Publisher

Bandwagon: The Journal of the Circus Historical Society, Inc. (USPS 406-390) (ISSN 0005-4968) is published bimonthly by the Circus Historical Society, Inc. for CHS members.

Bandwagon office of publication: 1075 West Fifth Avenue, Columbus, OH 43212 with additional entry at Jefferson City, MO. Periodical postage paid at Columbus, OH and additional entry offices. Postmaster: send all address changes to Bandwagon: The Journal of the Circus Historical Society, Inc., 1075 West Fifth Avenue, Columbus, OH 43212.

Advertising rates: back cover, \$350.00; full page, \$200.00; half page, \$125.00; quarter page, \$75.00.

Back Issues: A *Bandwagon* article index is on the CHS website <www.circushistory.org>. Issues from 1957 to 1969 are \$9.00 each; from 1970 to 2011 are \$7.00 each. Within the United States postage is \$2.50 for one issue, \$5.00 for two or more. Current year issues: \$11.00 each plus \$2.50 postage. Issues may be ordered from the office of publication above.

Circus Historical Society Mission Statement: To preserve, promote and share through education the history and cultural significance of the circus and allied arts, past and present.

Membership rate: Circus Historical Society membership is \$60.00 per year in the United States, \$80.00 per year in Canada, and \$105.00 international. Membership application and information are available on the CHS website <www.circushistory.org>, by contacting the Bandwagon office, or from the Secretary-Treasurer.

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Our Covers

Balloon ascensions were a popular free attraction on circuses during the nineteenth century's last three decades. Shows big and small featured the exhibition. Ben Wallace was among the proponents of the display, using it on his circus in the late 1880s and early 1890s. Dora Montrose, the show's aeronaut, took off from the midway each day, and when the hot air balloon "attained the greatest possible altitude," she bailed out, using a parachute in her "thrilling descent to earth." The front cover shows the balloon being prepped for flight while the back shows her starting her return to the terra firma.

Wallace believed a parachute jump was enough of a draw to merit its own advertising booklet for his Wallace and Anderson Circus 1890. Printed by the Donaldson Lithograph Company of Cincinnati, the four page booklet measures 5¾" x 8¾". While the two inside pages are mostly propaganda for the balloon ascension, they include portraits of owners Ben Wallace and James Anderson. The exhibition town and date—Perry, Iowa, July 7—is stamped on these pages, an oddity. The graphics and lack of text on the covers are atypical of the period, making the already-dynamic illustrations all the more striking.

Wallace's notoriety for running a red-hot grift show is well deserved—and well documented. Only a few days after the Perry engagement an incident occurred that spoke volumes about how rough and tough his grifters were. The July 11, 1890 *Rock Island (Illinois) Daily Argus* reported that with the support of the Rock Island Sheriff, a hard-as-nails private detective had, that very morning, arrested a Wallace confidence man as the show came into Rockford. The detective had been hired by an Iowa farmer who had been clipped for \$1,000 in a game of chance a month earlier by the man in custody. The article ended with the bad guy in the Rock Island jail, awaiting extradition to Iowa on the charge of grand larceny.

But that wasn't the end of the story. The next day the *Daily Argus* recorded the events of the previous night. The lawyer representing the Hawkeye farmer had asked the Rock Island Sheriff to drop the charges against the Wallace man, claiming he had recovered his client's \$1,000, "and was willing that the rascal go free again." The Sheriff was outraged by the request, but co-operated.

That same evening other grifters from the Wallace and Anderson show confronted the private detective who had jailed their cohort that morning to tell "him that he must desist from following them, and that if he did not he would fare badly—that 'they would as leave

suffer for one crime as another." He made the sensible, if not brave, decision to "place himself in the hands of the Sheriff until train time."

Referring to the show's grifters, the Rock Island newspaper commented that the "gang . . . is about as hard, and at the same time as smooth, as there is on the road." Indeed they were. They almost certainly threatened the lawyer to encourage him to drop the charges, and they so intimidated the man hired to pursue them that he took the next train out of town. This level of sophistication and ruthlessness rarely surfaces in the thousands of nineteenth century newspaper accounts about gambling and confidence schemes on circus lots. Not for nothing were Wallace's grifters known as the Forty Thieves.

Original booklet in Pfening Archives. Fred D. Pfening III

Thanks

The following assisted in making this issue a reality:

Maureen Brunsdale, Bob Cline, Ron Levere, Janet Pfening, Ralph Pierce, Jennifer Lemmer-Posey, Mark Schmitt, Pete Shrake, Cherie Valentine and Debbie Walk. John and Mardi Wells deserve kudos for their fine lay outs and graphics.

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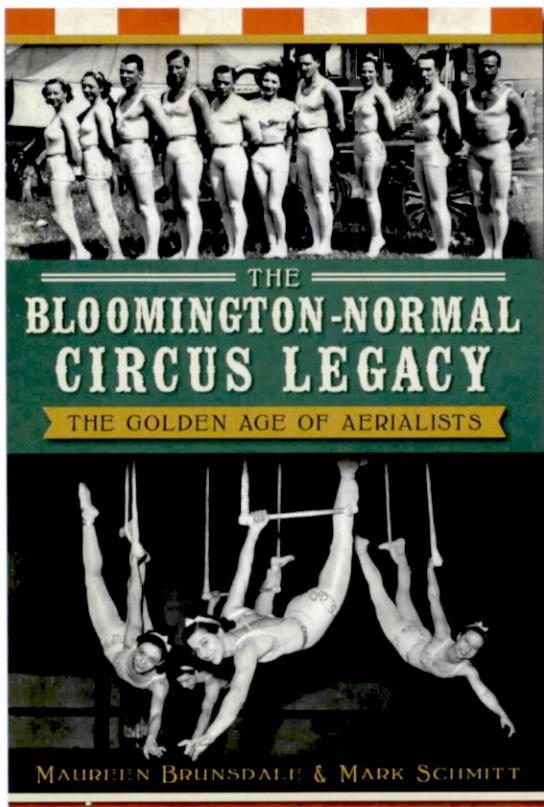
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On Ringling-Barnum in 1955

Part II

by William C. Taggart

Tuesday, August 16, Ogden, Utah: A short wagon show jump on the Union Pacific of 36 miles found us in Ogden, Utah. I will always remember the lot at the base of the beautiful blue Wasatch Mountains. Our cars were spotted three blocks from town and Bubbles of the Fredonia Risley act walked to town with me. We ate breakfast at a local café and then I went to see Walter O. Hare at the advance sale.

The sale was not much, but I did meet up with Ted Sato and we took a cab back to the lot. Edna Antes told me that Theo Forstall was thinking of sending me up on advance but, luckily for me, Louis E. "Red" Flanagan went instead. After finale, Lee Brown and I went to town, rented a room to take hot baths and quickly headed back to catch the second section before it left town.

Wednesday, August 17, Idaho Falls, Idaho: It was a 149 mile jump through scenic river valleys and mountain ridges as the show train moved over the Union Pacific line to Idaho. For most of the run the moon was high in the sky and its light reflected on the river beds along our route. We played a matinee only on a sandy and dusty lot owned by a colorful western character. The menagerie was side walled for the day. Larry Vogt had the advance sale and he was anxious to move on. That night, I stood on the car platform as we rolled up over the mountains toward Butte, Montana. Peggy and Jimmy Ringling spent part of the evening with me admiring the western scenery.

Thursday, August 18, Butte, Montana: We made a 212 mile jump on the Union Pacific to the copper mining town of Butte. I met Frank Pietras at a department store where he had the advance sale. Frank was discouraged as his advance was not good.

The lot was three miles out of town on a hillside and it was dusty as hell. The show did not look good there, appearing dusty and grey. Walter Rairden, Noyelles Burkhart's assistant, told of a "Hey Rube" he had witnessed years ago in Butte with the Tom Mix Circus. He smiled and said, "Those bullies scrambled when we brought out the elephants."

Friday, August 19, Missoula, Montana: It was a short run of one hundred twenty miles on the Northern Pacific to Missoula. Our cars were spotted close to town, but I still took a cab to meet Bill Sweeney at the sale. He was a short, ruddy-faced man with gold rimmed glasses, curly red hair, and always wore a tweedy suit. He always had a large gold watch chain that hung along his vest. I



always pictured him out ahead of the Buffalo Bill show. I regretted not getting to know him better. I was sure that he had lots of stories to tell, as he had been on the American Circus Corporation shows. I was back at the lot in time to have lunch with Edna Antes and Hilda Burkhart before the cookhouse closed. Alfred Burton, Dieter Havemann of the Fredonias Risley act, and others had a nice little birthday party for Ilonka Karoly before doors. We laughed later,

betting that her Dutch bottom was warm from spanking as she rode her horse around the ring in the riding act. We all enjoyed this great horse woman and we certainly loved her cousin Evy Karoly, who was a talented rider, trainer and eventually the mother of the outstanding rider Mark Karoly.

The menagerie was again side walled and I was prepared to take what became excellent movies of the big top being torn down and the flat cars being loaded. I can still see the huge big top floating to the ground and the crews of big top men starting to unlac the heavy sections of canvas. Our gang of circus folks sat outside the cars and listened to music until the silver train started to roll out of town at 6:30 p.m.

Saturday and Sunday, August 20-21, Spokane, Washington: Our three trains rolled west from Missoula, across the Bitterroot Range of mountains for 257 miles on the Northern Pacific Railroad. Again there was a full moon and, as we rolled ahead, I could enjoy the colorful western scenery. John Martinez, our porter, was busy cooking giant hamburgers and serving them with cold drinks. Late that night or in the early morning hours, I finally gave up and stretched out on my bed, pulled my privacy



*Edna Antes on Ringling-Barnum,
probably 1954. Sverre O. Braathen photo
used with permission from Illinois State
University's Special Collections, Milner
Library.*

curtains closed, and fell asleep.

I was up early, had a coffee, and headed to town. I met Hilda Burkhart at a little bakery where we enjoyed grilled pastries before taking a cab to the show grounds. Hilda and I were busy that afternoon working the Pass Box and collecting "taxes" on each pass we redeemed. Since we had left Chicago the press policy of the show had changed and all across the west more posters were placed around each town, and store owners were given general admission passes to redeem at our Pass Box. This policy helped improved business in many towns.

Between shows, I went over to the transportation department to have a visit with a friend there. He worked hard for Dave Blanchfield, "the Deacon," who was the colorful veteran department



James Montgomery Flagg, the great illustrator most famous for his World War I Uncle Sam recruiting poster, created this oddly laconic image for the 1955 Ringling-Barnum press guide. Pfening Archives.

head, spending most of his time changing tires on many of the show wagons. He also changed oil on our trucks, caterpillar tractors, and other vehicles. I thought it was a dirty, thankless job but so important to the movement of the big show.

After the night show the downtown streets of Spokane were crowded with circus folks enjoying late night meals at local eateries, cutting up "jackpots," and lining up to enter the movie theaters for a midnight show. We could stay out late as Sunday was to be a matinee only date.

Monday, August 22, Kennewick, Washington: We had a run of 148 miles on the Northern Pacific to Kennewick, southwest of Spokane. Our run took us along the Snake River to where it joined the mighty Columbia River. I was not impressed with the town. The lot was near the river and on the outskirts of town. Fair matinee and three quarter night show. Early in the evening, the punk elephants became spooked and Smokey Jones had to chase after them with Old Harold, the trustworthy bull horse. As in previous towns, when the bulls took off, Noyelles Burkhart and Walter Raideren were busy smoothing the nerves of the locals; most of the soothing was done with passes to the big show.

Tuesday, August 23, Yakima, Washington: After an 86 mile run on the Northern Pacific, I was able to jump out of

my car at the runs. I met Maxie Miller, brother of concession owner Paul Miller, and we shared a cab to the center of town. I was impressed with this lovely city in the heart of apple country. I knew that Yakima was the home of John Charles Thomas, a noted opera singer and showman. From the lot we could see Mt. Rainier. I waited in the backyard for Alfred Burton to finish his hand balancing act and then he and I rode the bus to the runs with clowns Duane Thorpe, Albert White, Gene Lewis, and Carl Stephens. They were all looking forward to our arrival in San Francisco and a few nights out on the town.

Wednesday to Friday, August 24-26, Seattle: After a 159 mile run on the Northern Pacific we arrived in the huge Seattle railroad yards. Seattle was known as a tough town full of rugged longshoremen, old WW I members, and a busy Barbary Coast. The city was noted for labor unrest, goon squads and Harry Bridges's longshoremen's union. I couldn't wait to take a cab to the city and pick up the advance sale. Dave Murphy had the sale. Our cars were spotted near the main Northern Pacific station. It was a cold damp day. I worked with Gene Lynch in the red ticket wagon until I joined Miss Hilda in the Pass Box. That night, our crew of pals went to the movies to see *The Seven Year Itch*. The big show did good business in Seattle, but the weather remained cold and damp.

Saturday and Sunday, August 27-28, Portland: It was 186 miles to Portland on the UP and we arrived in the yards early in the morning. I rode on the flats to the runs where I met my pal Jackie Besser. We rode our bus to the lot, which was near a race track. After breakfast with Walter Raideren, I headed to the ticket wagon to start selling advance sale tickets for the matinee. Warm beautiful day and a nice lot, all of this made everyone on the show feel in good spirits. I visited with a circus fan between shows and he promised to meet me after the evening performance and show me the town. We went to a coffee house and I enjoyed the music of a blues band. On Sunday, I was in the wagon early and had a large sale of three dollar reserve seat tickets.



Tractor pulling cage of Paul Fritz's lions on a terribly muddy lot at Mansfield, Ohio on July 14, 1955. Sverre O. Braathen photo used with permission from Illinois State University's Special Collections, Milner Library.



Second section of the train, 1955. Howard Tibbals Collection, The Ringling Museum.

Monday, August 29, Eugene, Oregon: We moved 124 miles south on the Southern Pacific heading for Northern California. To the west of us we could see the mighty Willamette Mountains. We played a fair grounds and the show looked fine with the American flag flying proudly over the big top. Late in the afternoon, I had time to take a nap out behind the side show top. I worked the Pass Box with Miss Hilda and heard all about life with the Nelson family of acrobats on the Cole show. This was where she and Noyelles met and eventually married.

That night Lee Brown and I took a cab to town for a late meal and then back to trains.

Tuesday, August 30, Klamath Falls, Oregon: That night we moved 194 miles south on the Southern Pacific. To the west of us was the Cascade mountain range and lots of great scenery. We were southwest of the Great Crater National Park. Our section pulled into the yards about 9:00 a.m. and the first section was already unloaded and on the way to the fairgrounds lot. I rode on the bus with Theo and Bobby De Loche. Both men had played this small town many times and said that it had always been a feed and water stop for circuses and Wild West shows. They didn't look forward to much box office business, but lots of lot lice.

After the evening performance a group of us went to a steak house for a hearty meal.

Wednesday, August 31, En Route: When we left Klamath Falls, we headed south through the Shasta Mountain range and along the Sacramento River valley to Richmond, California. Everyone enjoyed the long haul while visiting with friends, sharing snacks cooked by the train porters, drinking soda pops and beers, and relaxing in their bunks. I spent many hours standing on the car platform watching the western mountain scenery and breathing the fresh mountain air.

Thursday, September 1, Richmond, California: The morning of September 1, we arrived in Richmond, a small city across the bay from San Francisco. I soon learned that this was the home of the Henry Kaiser Shipyards. We had a fair matinee and a good house that night. In the evening, after my ticket wagon was closed and hauled to the runs, I sold tickets to late arrivals at the entrance to the big top. Like other nights, I was able to visit with Rudy Bundy while the Front Door crew took down the main entrance marquee. Sammy Elterman and Gregg Peterson of the front door crew brought Rudy and me coffee from the circus diner after they had finished rolling up the marquee canvas.

If my memory serves me well, the aerial ballet director Barbette had visitors at the matinee show. Barbette, one of the greatest aerialist of all time, was a tall, slightly built man, who had tiny feet and was slightly crippled at this time. He always was immaculately dressed in fine suits and spent hours by Pat Valdo's wagon watching show gals leave the dressing tent before hurrying to the big top for their production numbers. Barbette was noted for his sharp wit and tongue.

As a young man out of Texas, he became the toast of Paris as he performed his aerial act for European Café Society at the finest clubs on the continent, especially at the Casino de Paris. In later years, he starred on Broadway in the stage production of Jumbo, produced by Billy Rose. When he retired from performing, he worked for various circuses, the Cole show, Polack, and Ringling, creating

outstanding aerial ballet production numbers. As the late Tommy Bentley once told me, "It takes a man touched with the brush to produce colorful numbers." Barbette was that man.

Friday to Monday, September 2-5, San Francisco: It was a 68 mile run on the Southern Pacific to the railroad yards of the great city on the bay. As the flats were being unloaded at the runs, I stood there waiting for the show bus to carry a load of us not to the lot, but to the famous Cow Palace, a few miles away. Edna Antes was with me as we rode to the building. Edna told me that I would enjoy San Francisco, but she said, "Bill, it is warm during the day but when the fog rolls in it will be cool at night. Remember to always have a jacket with you."

There was talk of labor union trouble at the stand and as our bus pulled up in front of the building we were greeted with picket signs "Circus on Strike." We learned that the Teamsters Union was behind the pickets' efforts and a union organizer, Harry Karsh, and a former show usher, Joe "Killer" Kane, were out front leading the protests. I knew Kane and felt that he was a tough character.

Even with the trouble brewing our shows went on. The Friday matinee drew about three thousand spectators and we had a good house that night. Ted Sato and I decided to take a cab to Chinatown



Charley Moroski, born Czeslaw Mroczkowski, worked a great liberty act with horses from the fabled King Ranch in Texas on Ringling-Barnum in 1955. Howard Tibbals Collection, The Ringling Museum.



Third section of the Ringling-Barnum train coming into an unidentified town, 1955. Howard Tibbals Collection, The Ringling Museum.

for a meal and after that we did a little clubbing.

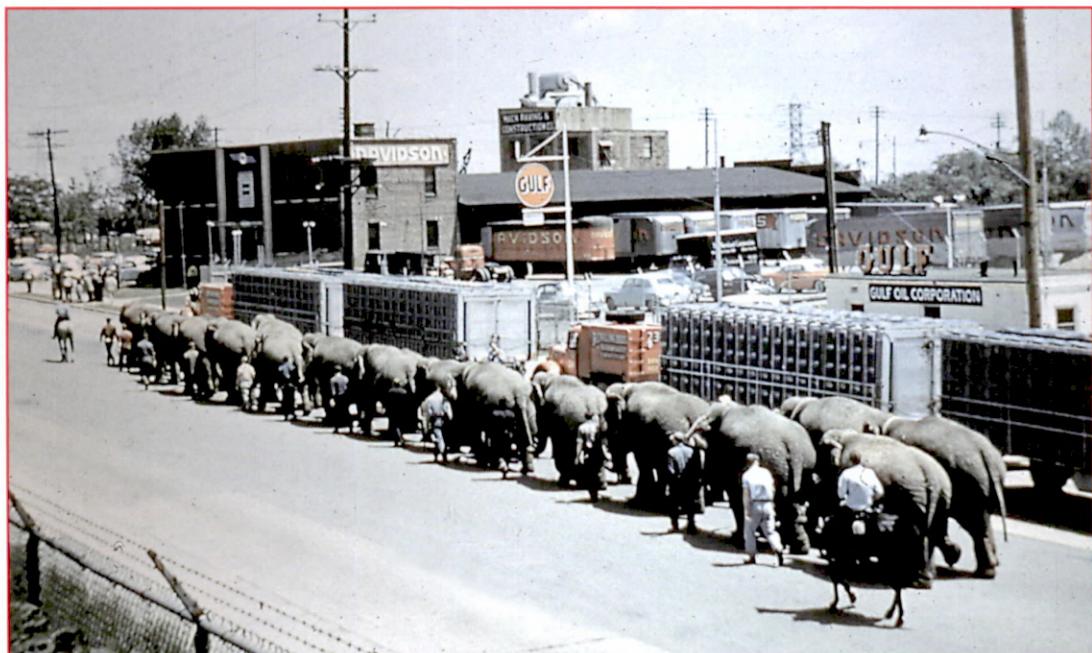
On Saturday morning the pickets were out and when Noyelles Burkhart realized that there were enough of them to cause trouble he ordered Smokey Jones to bring three elephants, carrying chains with their trunks, around to the front of the building. Smokey and his bulls discouraged the phony pickets and pictures were taken for the newspapers. Burkhart was an old school circus man, a Zack Terrell man, who would not let his show be intimidated. All of us on the show were proud of Noyelles for his leadership.

We knew that on Saturday evening after the show bus drivers, Larry Wilcox and Tommy Cropper, had organized an excursion to Finocchio's Night Club. I learned that this was perhaps the most famous drag club in America. Dieter told me that he had been told about the club by clown Ernie Burch. Ernie told him that "it was a real pansy bar." I had never been to a club like that and, with my pals, I was looking forward to the experience.

On the bus going to the club, I was told that Bette Davis, Tallulah Bankhead, Bob Hope, and Bing Crosby would fly up there from Hollywood just to see the shows and have a few hearty laughs. Albert White said, "Miss Bankhead always enjoyed watching men impersonate her."

The club featured fabled female impersonators and had three different shows each night. The artists were noted for their sensational costumes, suggestive one-liner gags, and catchy double entendre songs. Like some in the Ringling clown alley, the performance was dedicated to the skill of refined female illusionists. The star of the show that night was noted drag queen Ray Bourbon, who had once toured with Mae West. We were at the last show of the night and it was very late when our busses arrived back at our cars.

Elephants march to the lot from the train as trucks pull seat wagons in 1955. Howard Dolan, Sr. photo, Circus World Museum.





*Thanksgiving float from Holidays spec at Pittsburgh, July 8, 1955.
Sverre O. Braathen photo used with permission from Illinois State University's Special Collections, Milner Library.*

On Monday, September 5, our last day at the Cow Palace, pickets and teamster thugs tried to cause problems as we moved the circus out of the building and down the street to the runs. The show prevailed, and shortly before 1:00 a.m. our trains were rolling out of the yards.

The details of the San Francisco engagement were fully covered by my late friend Bobby Hasson in the November-December 1987 *Bandwagon*.

Tuesday, September 6, Fresno, California: We had a 100 mile jump to Fresno on the Southern Pacific. Fresno was in the heart of the San Joaquin Valley. We played this city to break a long run to the City of Angles. Fresno was a small town, but to us, waiting to get to Los Angeles, it was "just a whistle stop." That night at the train, Dieter and I watched a hotly contested crap game between a few ushers and candy butchers. The candy butchers had cash and loved to gamble because they knew that the next day would always be more lucrative for them.

Wednesday, September 7, Bakersfield, California: It was a 108 mile jump south to Bakersfield, a desert town northwest of Los Angeles. The air there was hot and dry and candy butchers did well selling popcorn and peanuts early in the show, making patrons thirsty for the arrival of butchers selling "ice cold Coca-Cola." It was so hot in the big top that high wire walker Josephine Berosini was unable to perform. At the end of the performance tired musicians ran from the top thirsty and, as always, hungry. A local fruit peddler sold huge cantaloupes to show personnel. Merle Evans was the first person in line to buy them.

Thursday to Sunday, September 8-11, Los Angeles: Because of railroad difficulties and a 169 mile jump, the circus arrived too late in the morning on Thursday and blew the first L.A. matinee. Our lot was

at Rodeo and West Jefferson. When I arrived there, Theo Forstall met me and said, "Bill, I am going to have you work the advance sale wagon for this engagement. We have installed ticket racks in the wagon and you will be able to select and sell advance ducats for each performance while in L.A. Be careful, don't get confused and Bobby and I know you can handle it." From that moment on I was worried and knew that I had to be very careful while selling the ducats.

I really don't have many memories of the stand except those of sitting in that wagon, looking out on the midway, glancing over to the side show bally platform, and selling tickets and more tickets for date after date. At every performance I would have Meeks, whose given name I can't remember, take my unsold tickets for that show to Edna and she would distribute them out to sellers that were working on that immediate show. At night I sent my ticket report to Theo and my money on to Bobby De Loche.

Nena Evans assisted Hilda Burkhart at the Pass Booth. The two ladies were busy taking care of celebrities who were coming to see the show. Handsome Buddy North was also there to lend assistance along with Ted Sato. Movie stars George Raft, Yul Brenner, Dorothy Lamour, Randolph Scott, Mitzie Gaynor, Marge and Gower Champion and Spike Jones were just a few in attendances.

Then in his nineties, Jake Posey, famed forty horse hitch teamster on the old Barnum show, attended a matinee as did trapeze artist Winfred Colleano. Parley Baer and his wife Ernestine Clarke threw a party for some of the performers at their home in Thousand Oaks.

On Sunday evening September 11, big top crews were waiting for the seat wagons to be dismantled and pulled out of the big top, as they were anxious to lower the canvas, roll it into bundles, and hoist the huge bundles onto the canvas trucks. They knew, however, that they would be back on the same lot five days later.

Monday, September 12, Van Nuys, California: We were in Van Nuys, just a short 15 miles away on Monday morning. The lot was at Roscoe and Woodman. That afternoon, I was in the ticket wagon and all of a sudden character actor Andy Devine was asking me for two good seats for the evening show. Behind him was actor Noah Berry, Jr. who was also buying tickets for that performance.

Tuesday, September 13, Pasadena, California: The Southern Pacific carried us 18 miles to the rail yards of Pasadena and it was a short haul to the parking lot of the famed Rose Bowl. I received mail



Elephants on way to lot with Smokey Jones on horse in lead, 1955. That season Ringling-Barnum carried 52 elephants, the most ever for any circus. Howard Tibbals Collection, The Ringling Museum.



Dragon display about to go into the big top as part of the Holidays spec, Ringling-Barnum, 1955. Howard Tibbals Collection, The Ringling Museum.

from home delivered by mail man Joe Bananas, whose real name was Clifton Sparpana.

Wednesday, September 14, Long Beach, California: Here we played the Veterans Memorial Stadium Parking lot and we had a light matinee and a three-quarter house that night. All of this after a 32 miles jump on the Southern Pacific.

Wednesday night, once more, the show was torn down and the ring stock and elephants marched to the stock cars. Old Harold, the elephant department horse from the Al G. Barnes Circus, led the way proudly.

Thursday, September 15, East Los Angeles, California: The ring stock could have walked to the next lot as it was a short ten mile jump on the Union Pacific. Again, the big show did fair business and workingmen were ready to move on to our three day stand back in L.A. That night while the trains were being loaded, Theo Forstall convinced Ted, Edna, Bobby, Doc Henderson and I to join him at a large Chinese restaurant.

Friday to Sunday, September 16-18, Los Angeles: For the first time in the long season we were back at the same lot at Rodeo and West Jefferson. Again it was "Hooray for Hollywood time," for my friends Dieter, Alfred, Bubbles, Johnny Yong and many other performers as they loaded show busses for a trip to newly opened Disneyland. I had to stay on the lot and work in the wagon, but I did loan my camera to Dieter and Alfred to make movies of the trip. We all were enjoying the west coast but also were looking forward to heading east on the southern route.

Press agent Norman Carroll, a longtime friend of Edna's, stopped by for a visit, and told me that the next time I was in L.A. I had to be sure to have a Monday noon lunch at the Paul Eagles Luncheon Club. Meetings were held at Philippe's Restaurant, a short distance from Union Station in the heart of downtown. Paul Eagles, when in town, was in the habit of joining friends, mostly show people, there on Mondays. He founded the club to raise funds for children and, over fifty years later, it still is in existence. Paul Eagles passed on in 1968.

Once again, the six performances did not break any records. On Sunday night everyone was ready to leave town and begin the long trip east. People actually looked forward to one day stands.

September 19-October 10, End of California Tour

Monday, September 19, San Bernardino, California: It was a cool morning and I was up early and rode the same bus as the candy butchers and ushers to the lot. I unlocked the wagon and Mr. Ed Kelly went into the office section of the wagon with me. After readying my mail, I opened the front ticket window and started the advance sale for the day. During my free time I visited with Kelly about the condition of the lot and wondered where Meeks, the wagon man, was. He always cleaned the wagons when we arrived. Later I would discover that he road overland with some friends. I remember the lot was tight and sandy.

Mike Bergin, side show tickets seller, and I ate lunch at a little bar across the street from the lot. Gene Lynch had arrived to take over for me. Miss Hilda and I were working the Pass Booth that stand but she was late arriving. Their sleeper car had been derailed. The drawbar pulled and the car had to be left in the Los Angeles railroad yard for repairs. After the accident the show bus went back there to drive them to the lot in San Bernardino.

That last night in California Ted Sato, Doc Henderson, Edna Antes, Bob Dover and Antoinette Bisbini and I ate at a Chinese joint just across from the lot. When we got back to the cars I washed,



Trapeze artist Antoinette Bisbini in 1955. She married assistant performer director Bob Dover at the end of the season. Howard Tibbals Collection, The Ringling Museum.

listened to my portable radio and relaxed as it was a 367 mile jump into Phoenix, Arizona. We all had cookhouse prepared dukie boxes with ham and cheese sandwiches, an orange, and two cup cakes. We were prepared. On our arrival in Phoenix we would only have a late matinee on the first day.

Tuesday, September 20, En Route: When Lee Brown woke me up we were somewhere in the desert and traveling along the rails of the Southern Pacific right beside the fabled Salton Sea. I took movies of the sea and the cactus as the train sped along. I also had a hardy breakfast of ham and eggs and fresh coffee cooked by our car porter.

I spent much of the afternoon standing on the car platform visiting and enjoying the view with my friends Jimmy and Peggy Ringling. Their stateroom was in the car next to ours.

As we neared Phoenix, we traveled by mile after mile of World War II airplanes that were stored in the desert. It was an unforgettable sight. I also took movies of the scene. By the time we reached Phoenix it was about 4:00 p.m. I jumped out of the coach and ran ahead to ride the flats to the show runs. Then I was able to catch the first bus. The cookhouse was up and serving hotcakes and coffee. Gene Lynch and I ate a hearty breakfast and then headed to the ticket wagons.

When Nena Evans arrived at the red office wagon she received an urgent telegram for Bobby Hasson, our side show manager. It was sad news that his dad had passed away suddenly back east. Ticket seller Red McKitrick took over the side show in Bobby's absence and I went to work in his wagon for the come ins and also helped Gene Lynch on advance sales. When I had sold my capacity of \$1.00 tickets and the come in was over, I stayed in the yellow wagon until 10:00 p.m. I enjoyed listening to Red make his side show openings and gathering large tips. He then convinced the local lot lice to buy big show tickets. Red was a master side show barker.

After closing I wandered out to the back yard to visit with Dieter, Alfred Burton, and Little Bit Karoly while the show was still on. There was always someone to visit with at the back yard grab joint usually spotted right near the back entrance for spec and other production numbers. Dieter and I rode the bus to the train and then decided to walk about ten blocks to the center of town, where we found a late night café and enjoyed hot roast beef sandwiches.

Wednesday, September 21, Phoenix: I was on the lot about 8:00 a.m. and ate a hearty breakfast at the cookhouse. I then walked to the front of the lot and opened the yellow ticket wagon at nine. I wrote a few letters to family and friends, listened to my Motorola radio, sold a few tickets for the matinee and cut up jackpots with Ted Sato and Irma Pushnik Meyer, one of my favorite people. When it neared lunch time I was able to take a break and Ted and I ate



Halloween float used in Holidays spec, Detroit, July 2, 1955.
Sverre O. Braathen photo used with permission from Illinois State University's Special Collections, Milner Library.

lunch at a Chicken Hut, just across the street from the grounds. After lunch I opened the green wagon and sold general admission tickets or the matinee.

Thursday, September 22, Tucson, Arizona: After tear down, the big show jumped one hundred and twenty-one miles to Tucson on the Southern Pacific line. I was up about nine and walked along the cars until I hit the highway. It was a three block walk to the lot. The coaches were parked about half way between the lot and town, which made it convenient. At Gene Lynch's suggestion I went into town, shopped for a while, and ate lunch at a Walgreens. After I finished the special turkey dinner I went to the drug store and met with the advance ticket seller. We did fair business at the matinee and at the blow off I took movies of Dieter Havemann selling programs and Jackie Besser at his candy stand.

It was cool at night and after the ticket wagons were closed I had to stay by the entrance and sell tickets to any late patrons who wanted to go into the big top. I always had a good visit with Rudy Bundy as he was in charge of the front door. Rudy was probably John Ringling North's best friend on the show.

I then returned any unsold tickets to Edna Antes at her little office wagon in front of the side show. I helped her close her office, lock things up, and we took the bus to the train. I went to car 369 with Edna and gave my sales money to Theo Forstall. Theo, Edna, Bobby De Lochte and I all had a short visit. After I returned to the ticket sellers car Gene Lynch and I decided to walk to town for late ice cream and in a little novelty section of the shop I bought a small porcelain giraffe for my mom. Once back at the train, I fell fast to sleep even before our second section rolled out of town.

Friday and Saturday, September 23-24, El Paso, Texas: It was a 312



The Fredonias, a German Risley act, at Pittsburgh on July 6, 1955. The author's friend Dieter Havemann is on the far left. Sverre O. Braathen photo used with permission from Illinois State University's Special Collections, Milner Library.

mile jump from Tucson and to El Paso. Because of the long run, we gave only an evening show on the first day. During the morning I was again on our platform visiting with Jimmy Ringling and taking some movies. By middle afternoon our second section sat outside of town for the longest time, it seemed like hours. After the evening performance Dieter and I ventured with Ted Sato over the bridge into Juarez, Mexico. The streets of Juarez were crowded with circus people and Dieter, Ted, and I met up with Eddie Howe, Chester, a

ticket seller, and clowns Prince Paul and Swartzie.

I was not able to write home about my Juarez night club experiences but as they say, "A good time was had by all."

I was at the ticket wagon at 9:00 a.m. as usual the next morning, but tired after the night out on the town in Juarez. Dieter and I had checked into a hotel for hot baths and a real bed and when I left the hotel in the morning the paper was running a story about President Eisenhower having a heart attack. That was not happy news for America. Both shows were strong that day.

Sunday and Monday, September 25-26, Odessa, Texas: Bobby De Loche had told me that Odessa was a booming oil town and I was looking forward to playing there. We had made a 286 mile Sunday jump to be there and as it was a Sunday we only had a night performance. Gene Lynch had opened the wagon and had a large advance sale going on and I headed to the cookhouse. The cookhouse was open late and I had baked macaroni and cheese and



Noyelles and Hilda Burkhart with Lucio Cristiani, in clown garb, on Cole Bros. Circus at Rockford, Illinois on July 12, 1947. Sverre O. Braathen photo used with permission from Illinois State University's Special Collections, Milner Library.

hotdogs for supper. After the finale Dieter, Moran, and I went out for oyster stew and to see the movie *To Catch a Thief*. Back at the cars, I was ready for a good night of sound sleep.

As usual I opened the ticket wagon at nine next morning for our second day in Odessa, and was busy all morning selling tickets until Gene Lynch relieved me. I went to the cook house with Miss Hilda and Noyelles Burkhart where we had a great meal of meat loaf, mashed potatoes, string beans, and a nice garden salad. I worked the Pass Booth with Miss Hilda for the afternoon show and at night. Early in the evening Nena Evans brought Miss Texas over to the booth for her center ring seats and we enjoyed meeting the beautiful gal. The show left Odessa with a good bankroll.

Tuesday, September 27, Abilene, Texas: We made a 167 mile jump into this town and arrived late and found that it was a long and difficult haul from the runs to the lot. The matinee doors did not open until 4:00 p.m. Ticket holders were not happy. Arthur M. Concello, former show manager, stopped to visit with Nena Evans and many of the bosses on the show. Everyone wondered what Concello was really up to. There was always intrigue when Concello was around and, of course, he was well aware of the management



Payoff spec float from Holidays production number at Detroit on July 3, 1955. Sverre O. Braathen photo used with permission from Illinois State University's Special Collections, Milner Library.

problems on the show since the firing of McClosky and Kernan earlier in the season. We had a sell out that night. Ticket sellers Ken Mayo, Brownie and I took the early or Unus Bus to the train. Unus was the center ring star and after his act there was an early bus to take him and his wife to the train. Thus we called it the Unus Bus.

Wednesday and Thursday, September 28-29, Fort Worth: We had a 161 mile jump on the TP railroad and arrived very late. We arrived about ten thirty in the morning but the cars had to be turned around in the switching yard which took time. Finally we made it to the runs. The lot was near a Sears store, but a long haul from the runs. Lloyd Morgan and Mr. Ed Kelly agreed to call off the matinee and Gene Lynch and I took a cab to town to pick up the advance sales from ticket seller Larry Vogt. I went to a barber shop as I was badly in need of a haircut before going back to the lot. We had a three quarter house that evening.

Opened the wagon at nine the next morning as usual and had lunch with Ted Sato at a deli near Sears. It was a warm day and between shows I fell asleep in my folding canvas chair in the shade beside the yellow wagon. I had a wonderful rest until Meeks woke me to go to work. I ate a large hamburger at Paul Fisher's stand and topped it off with frozen custard. Then off to work the evening show. Before finale I spent some time in the back yard visiting with clown Manfred Fritsch and Dieter. Finally I rode the bus to the train with Merle and Nena Evans and then went out to a late meal with ticket seller Leonard Brown. I had a good sleep once I hit my bunk in the sleeper.

Friday to Sunday, September 30-October 2, Dallas: It was a short 31 mile jump into Dallas on the FTW&D line. We were to play there for three days for a total of six shows. Everyone was looking forward to a bit of rest. I was looking forward to seeing my old ticket seller boss Bill McGough, who lived on the outskirts of Dallas. His little Four Paw Ranch was in Mesquite, Texas. He had left the show early in the season.

When I first arrived on the lot the second day of the stand, I was surprised to see my friend Craig Johnson, a private in the U. S. Army. He was stationed at a base nearby. Craig was my next door neighbor from Clyde, New York, and I was excited to see him. We went back many years. I gave him a back yard pass and he spent the day in and out of the tent watching the performance and ate his meals with Alfred Burton and Dieter Havemann at the cookhouse.

When I finished work for the day Craig and I met Dieter in the backyard, watched finale and then headed to our hotel with Alfred Burton and Craig Johnson with us. Somehow we managed to get Craig and Alfred into our room, where we spent the evening cutting up jackpots.

When I arrived to open the wagon at nine on Sunday there was a line cued up to purchase advance sale tickets. By noon I had sold all the available reserved seats for the afternoon show and started selling tickets for the evening performance. I hardly had time to take a break or to relieve myself. Luckily, I had an old coffee can hidden under the counter so that I could keep on working. As the currency piled up I placed the bills under my seat so that when I had a moment to make bundles they were flat and easy to bundle. Meeks would take the money from me and take it to Bobby and Theo in the silver wagon whenever I called him. He was just the best friend and a great wagon man; after all he was a veteran of the Cole show, as were many of the best people on Ringling from Noyelles Burkhart to Nena Evans and down the line. Meeks brought me a sandwich around five and I did not leave the wagon until eight that evening when the night show was sold out. It was a long day but wonderful to see the dollars roll in. That night Ted Sato and I went to see a movie *The Tall Men*, a western with Clark Gable, Robert Ryan, and Gail Russell. We luckily got a cab back to the train just as our second section was starting to roll out of town.

Monday, October 3, Wichita Falls, Texas: We jumped 148 miles on the FTW&D line. The weather was chilly and it rained on and off. The big top crew had difficulty spreading all the canvas and George Werner found the going difficult. The lot was muddy. When I left my sleeper I was able to meet up with Noyelles Burkhart and take a cab to town with our legal adjuster. It was good to be with him and he was always ready to talk about

Zack Terrell and the Cole show. Luckily, I went back to the train for my rain gear and rubber boots. The midway was a sea of mud forcing manager Lloyd Morgan to have men spread sawdust over the entire area. After a day on a wet lot Ted Sato, Bob Dover and I took a cab to a motel near the trains. Here we were able to shower before heading to the second section. Once again it was a close call as our cab arrived as the train was ready to roll out of town. The railroad had received storm warnings and feared flooding.

Tuesday, October 4, Amarillo, Texas: It was a 222 mile move to this city and all sections of the Ringling train were late. Gene Lynch and I sat together on the bus and then headed to the cookhouse for a hearty breakfast of chipped beef on toast. Word was sent out that Mr. Ed Kelly was asking performers to help set up seat wagons by tossing bibles and erecting chairs in the big top. All of this would be rewarded by "cherry pie," or extra money. The matinee started after four with a half house. The evening house was three quarter. Ted Sato and I took a cab to town just to escape from the circus for a while. We enjoyed a meal but when we returned to the railroad yards we found our trains had been moved. Luckily, our cab found

the cars.

Wednesday, October 5, Plainview, Texas: We moved 74 miles on the AT&SF line. I was up early, had coffee with some of the ticket sellers at the car and then off on the bus to the lot. As I looked around Plainview, I thought to myself that the town was appropriately named. It seemed very plain. About ten in the morning Dieter and Alfred stopped by the ticket wagon and wished me a happy birthday. I was now all of 24 years old. Between shows Hilda and Edna organized a little party for me in back of the side show. We had a large cake, ice cream and lots of good cheer. Hilda and Noyelles gave me a nice dress shirt; Edna gave me a colorful tie; and Alfred and Dieter presented me with lovely Swank cuff links and tie clasp set with small pearls. I still have the set today and wear them when I attend events at the Showfolks of Sarasota.

Thursday, October 6, Lubbock, Texas: A forty-seven mile jump into Lubbock was no big deal. We arrived early and had a lovely lot. I was early and watched men driving stakes, spreading canvas, as the horses or ring stock came to the lot. The horse tops were ready for them, straw bedding was spread, hay was there for the stock, and the water truck was on hand to fill all the waiting buckets. Old Man Miller and his assistant Dutch were proudly inspecting the sixty odd head of horses along with Doc Henderson and Doc Higgins. Later I was able to share breakfast with the two Docs.

Friday, October 7, Brownwood, Texas: The move to this town was a long 230 miles, which allowed lots of time for good sleeping in the cars along the route. Fall weather was now with the show and it was time to take sweaters and jackets to the lot. The matinee was a bit late but both shows managed to please good houses.

Saturday, October 8, Temple, Texas: We had a 125 mile run on the AT&SF line on a cool night with the moon high in the sky. A fine night for sleeping

as everyone in the ticket sellers' and ushers' car was relaxed and enjoying the run. Our cars, the second section, were parked in the railroad yards close to town, but I had a rough time trying to catch a cab to town. The show lot was tight and the menagerie tent could not be set up, thus it was side walled. The elephants seemed contented, enjoying the fresh air, digging up hunks of grass with their trunks and tossing grass and dirt onto their heads and backs. Jackie Besser did a brisk business selling peanuts for the elephants. I had a large "walk away" at the matinee and Ted Sato teased me about going into the tent to find the guy who left all the extra cash as he hurried into the main tent.

Nena Evans's sister visited the show and Nena introduced her to everyone at the front end. Between shows we had time to buy some cantaloupe from a vendor and took treats to Old Ruth, one of the most popular bulls on the show.

Sunday, October 9, En Route: From Temple we had a 165 mile run on the MKT line and we were scheduled to have a Sunday off in San Antonio. We had not had a free Sunday in many weeks and everyone was looking forward to the day. When I woke up late



Baby elephant in carriage ready for Mama's in the Park production number, 1955. Howard Tibbals Collection, The Ringling Museum.

morning I could see that we were in town. I put on my new red Tattersall's shirt, a blue pair of dress slacks, my new Wellington boots and I felt all duded up for my first visit to San Antonio. Chicken Charlie, the old porter, told me that the lot was a long dukie run from the cars, but I was able to catch a cab to the lot.

The cookhouse was open as crews were spreading canvas and lifting the big top into place. I ate breakfast and went to the yellow wagon to meet Gene Lynch. He left and I stayed to sell advance tickets to the shows until all the lot lice left the show grounds.

I was finally able to lower the yellow ticket wagon window about 5:00 p.m. Jimmy Ringling and Mr. Ed Kelly told me to head to town and enjoy my evening. Earlier in the day Lloyd Morgan stopped at the window and told me that the Third Section had been derailed near Austin, Texas. There were all kinds of rumors as to the seriousness of the accident, and I knew that all of the performers were not happy being stranded on a day off.

In the evening, I met Dieter and Alfred and we hooked up with Ted Sato for a Tex-Mex dinner and two movies. We then headed to the hotel for some relaxation.

Monday and Tuesday, October 10-11, San Antonio: I was up early again and had the ticket wagon open at nine. I was busy selling reserved seats most of the morning and enjoyed listening to my Motorola portable radio when I didn't have customers. That afternoon, I worked the Pass Booth with Miss Hilda, and Edna Antes came over to visit with Hilda about her morning of shopping in San Antonio. Business was fair even with threats of rain. I went to the hotel early and had a meal with Sato and Dieter. No movies for me tonight. I was tired.

The next morning, Dieter and I were up early and ate breakfast in the hotel coffee shop and with my Keystone camera we headed off for a morning of sightseeing. Indeed were we tourists that nice San Antonio day. When we arrived at the Alamo we were surprised at the size of the great fortress where the Texans bravely fought the Mexicans. I took movies of Dieter standing in front of the Alamo. Gene Lynch had agreed to open early for me so I did not have to be at the lot until time for Miss Hilda and me to work the Pass Booth. Business was fair even with the threat of rain.

Wednesday, October 12, Corpus Christi, Texas: We moved south



Circus Chaplin Father Ed Sullivan good naturedly posed for this gag photo in which he took a pitchfork to the hide of the devil himself, in this case clown Ernie Burch in costume for the Holidays spec. Ringling-Barnum, 1955. Howard Tibbals Collection, The Ringling Museum.



Christmas float in Holidays spec in 1955 with clown Felix Adler dressed as Santa Claus and equestrian Pirkko Gerdes-Ussin as a good-looking elf. Conover Photographic Collection, courtesy of Bob Cline.

on the Southern Pacific toward Corpus Christi and for many miles it seemed that we were going through swamp land and flooded areas. It had rained all night and it was a damp, chilly day. It seemed that we had crossed many trestles and bridges to get to the railroad yards outside of town. When I caught the bus to the lot the cookhouse was up and serving breakfast, but they were having trouble pulling the center pole wagon on to the lot. It was the heaviest wagon on the show. George Werner, his assistant Bing, Walter Bingham, were in a conference with Lloyd Morgan, Jimmy Ringling, and Mr. Kelly. There was a huge advance sale for the show that day, but George Werner insisted that he would not be able to put the big top on the lot. Not only would all the wagons get stuck, but he also feared that the big top stakes would not hold in the muddy muck. He shook his head and told the big shots "no way." Word reached Johnny North and he went out with local officials to find a new lot but this was to no avail. There had been too much rain.

By noon tractors slowly pulled any wagons that were on the road back to the train runs. The cookhouse served lunch and then was torn down and returned to the First Section. Horses and elephants were unloaded as usual, but kept by the stock cars. They never did make it to the lot. The word around the show was that Johnny North was furious. The downtown ticket seller had to stay in town for a few days to refund money for two sold out houses.

The rest of the day show folks hung around the cars not knowing when the train would leave for the next town. Car porters all did great business selling sandwiches, soup, beer and other drinks. I stayed most of the time in my bunk, having a well-deserved rest.

In the early evening our Ringling trains headed on to Victoria, Texas.

Thursday, October 13, Victoria, Texas: The run was 111 miles on the Southern Pacific. Weather was not great but we did have a half house at the matinee and a three quarter house at night.

Showing Across the South

It was a cool fall morning when our train arrived in the Southern Pacific railroad yards in New Iberia, Louisiana on Thursday, October 20. Ticket seller Lee Brown and I were up early and hailed a cab to downtown, where we enjoyed a southern style breakfast before we went to the store where the advance ticket seller was hard



Clown Walter Guice, once a great aerial bar performer, sits atop the Water Wagon float used in the Holidays spec at Toledo, Ohio on July 4, 1955. Sverre O. Braathen photo used with permission from Illinois State University's Special Collections, Milner Library.

at work.

We had a chat with the ticket seller, William McAleer, and then headed to the lot to meet Edna Antes in her little ticket distribution wagon at the center of the side show banner line. I remember remarking to Lee how strange I found the cemeteries in New Iberia, where all the deceased were buried in vaults above ground. Lee reminded me that everyone did not live as we did in upstate New York. Because of the moisture in the South, burial customs were different. Lee also told me that New Iberia was the home of the famous Tabasco sauce which was very popular in the South.

Bobby Hasson was busy making the morning bally for the side show when we arrived and he was trying his best to collect a large tip. I can still him hear him, "Come on in, they are all alive, all on the inside. Johann Petursson the Viking giant; Harry Doll, world's smallest man; Frieda Pushnik, the armless and legless lady. Come on in, see them now." Ticket sellers Charlie Christian and Mike Bergin were busy waving the tip toward the ticket boxes. All of the big show tickets wagons were ready to open for the day. For me, it was just another day on the Greatest Show on Earth. Little did I know what was to happen to me later in the day.

I worked the Pass Booth that afternoon with Hilda Burkhart and between shows she and I went to dinner at the cookhouse with Edna Antes. As usual our fine old veteran waiter, Frank Curtis, looked immaculate in his white waiter's uniform and little paper hat. We enjoyed our roast beef dinners with lots of mashed potatoes and collard greens. Freshly baked cherry pie was our dessert.

As we returned to the front of the lot, Theo Forstall was standing outside the silver wagon and in front of the big show

main entrance having a cup of coffee. Theo turned to me and said "Bill, I have a new job for you that you may enjoy." He then told me that an advance ticket seller was ill and that I would have to go ahead of the show for a few dates and work the downtown ticket sales. I would have to leave late that night for Jonesboro, Arkansas.

Theo and Bobby De Lochte, the assistant treasurer, had an advance sale kit prepared for me. I was given railroad script to pay for my trip to Jonesboro. I had a bankroll, hotel reservation information, bank details, a contract for the store where the sale was to be located, and a few reserve and some regular seat passes for my use. I also had a set of center ring reserved seat tickets for the advance sale and sales forms to be filled out each day. I was to open at the store on Monday, October 24 and close at noon Tuesday, November 1, the show date.

After saying good bye to Edna and all my friends on the show I was back at the train and in my sleeper packing clothes for my trip. I took a taxi to the New Iberia railroad station. I remember waiting for the train to arrive with the overnight sleeper for my trip to Little Rock, Arkansas. I was a bit sad, as I really did not look forward to being ahead of the show. We were soon to be playing New Orleans. I had never been to the Crescent City and I was looking forward to that experience.

Midday, October 21, I arrived at the Little Rock station and then transferred to a train taking me on to Jonesboro. I arrived there late in the evening and checked into the Noble Hotel, right in the center of town. Now I was really on my own. Monday, October 24, I would open downtown sales in Jonesboro.

There was not a lot to do in Jonesboro so I spent my evenings in my hotel room listening to my portable radio. The hit song at that time was *We Have These Moments to Remember*. I was in the Deep South now and had grits for breakfast with eggs and bacon,

sometimes biscuits and gravy, and lots of southern fried chicken and okra for my evening meal.

I was well aware of the fact that I was in the segregated South and that you did not see blacks on the streets at night and few in the daytime. I remember one black porter who worked at the store where the advance sale was. He was friendly, but shy. No blacks ever bought advance sale tickets.

While I was staying in Jonesboro the show played October 21 to 23, the weekend, in New Orleans and then jumped to Baton Rouge on Monday, the 24th. Tuesday the 25th it jumped 111 miles to Alexandria, Louisiana and then on 122 miles to Shreveport, Louisiana where the show played the fair grounds.

It would then make a long jump to Tyler, Texas and on to Longview and Texarkana where we had two straw houses. In Hot Springs, Arkansas, on Sunday, the 30th we did great business in spite of a protest of a Sunday show by local ministers. On Monday, October 31, Halloween, we were in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, where the show had a one quarter matinee and three quarter night



Easter Float from Holidays spec. North Starlet Pat Hines poses on wagon, 1955. Howard Tibbals Collection, The Ringling Museum.

performance.

Finally, the circus arrived in Jonesboro on the morning of November 1, and I was up early and at the runs waiting for the first section to come into town. I had spent eleven days in Jonesboro and was ready to leave town after I closed my advance sale. I really did not make any friends in town, but I was able to arrange for clown Emmett Kelly to attend the Rotary Club luncheon before the matinee.

By mid-afternoon I bid goodbye to the folks at the store and took a cab to the show lot. There I checked in with Edna and Theo, and enjoyed dinner in the cookhouse with Edna, Theo, and Bobby and then roamed around the lot checking in on my friends. I caught up on news with Jack Besser at the menagerie peanut, Crackerjack and lemonade stand, and then I was off to see Alfred Burton, and Dieter and all of the Fredonia act. I also visited with Joe Guzman who was working the popcorn stand across from my friend Jack. Jack saved used flukum cups and Joe saved popcorn boxes. It was a busy "come in" and I relished the smell of the menagerie as I chatted with my friends. I felt right at home.

Later I went to see Felix and Amelia Adler in clown alley and then off to have coffee at the back yard grease joint. It was a real pleasure to be back on the show, even if it was to be a short visit. Even though I did not go into the big top for more than a few minutes, I enjoyed being on the outside listening to the announcements by Count Nicholas and the baritone voice of Harold Ronk as he sang the lyrics of the *Holidays* spec. "What a gay world, Hip hooray world, When our Holidays begin." I also loved the music of the clown walk arounds, especially *Lazarus Trombone, Walking Frogs* by Karl King, and the *Muskrat Ramble*. You could always hear Lew Bader and Andy Grainger playing their trombones. This pair of men were the best in the business and long-time members of the Evans band. Kenny Dodd once told me that these were three of Merle Evans's favorite musical numbers for the clowns, and he used them when the cat act cages were being torn down.

That night, Theo told me that I had to leave in the morning for Greenwood, Mississippi where the show was to play on Tuesday, November 8. I was to open advance ticket sales there on November 3.

On Wednesday, November 2, the show trains arrived in Memphis on the Frisco line, and I took a cab to town with Noyelles and he treated me to a fancy breakfast at the famous Peabody Hotel. After a short visit with press agent Frank Braden, who was staying there as always, I was off to the station for a trip on the Illinois Central to Greenwood. I arrived in the heart of cotton country, late in the afternoon and took a cab to the Hotel Irving. I would be there from November 3 to 8. I was once again in the Deep South.

The Hotel Irving was a four story brick building on the corner of Howard Street and within walking distance of all of downtown. I liked eating at the Post Office Café and Dining Room in the hotel.

Like at the hotel in Jonesboro they served delicious southern style cooking. If you peeked into the kitchen area you could see the black women kitchen cooks hard at work. In 2012 the hotel was remodeled and is now known as the Alluvian Hotel.

Early in 1955, a young black chap from Chicago was visiting Greenwood where he made the mistake of whistling at a white woman. That night he was shot to death, beaten, and his body was thrown in the Yazoo River at the edge of town. Two white defendants were charged with the murder and their trial took place in September. They were acquitted, after a five day trial. When I arrived in Greenwood, the murder and trial was the talk of the town. As I was a Yankee from the North and a representative of the circus, I did not discuss my feelings. The Emmett Till murder in Greenwood was really the catalyst for the civil rights disturbances throughout the South.

At 9:00 a.m. on November 3, I was at Barrett's Drug Store to begin my day. After introducing myself to the management, I set up shop selling circus tickets. There

was lots of interest in the 1955 edition of *The Greatest Show on Earth*, and I was proud to be working ahead of the show. I remember lots of middle aged and older people checking out my big top seating plan and by late in the afternoon I had a good first day sale.

When I took my lunch break on the second day I walked into the Greenwood Camera Store which was just down the street. I was looking for a new camera and I knew exactly what I wanted. Ted Sato, the show photographer and a friend,

had sparked my interest in a Rolleicord camera and I was able to find one there for a price I could afford. I still have the camera today, over fifty years later.

The sales chap at the store became a friend and we corresponded for several years. Once or twice he joined me for dinner at Lusco's, a popular Greenwood eatery that opened in 1933, survived the depression and was the in place for the Delta gentry to dine. Its specialty was pompano, boiled shrimp, rib eye steaks, and spaghetti with homemade meatballs.

I also became friendly with a young man working at the drug store, Dean MacMillan. He was a medical student at a nearby university. Once in a while he joined me at the hotel for dinner and drinks. After dinner, in the evening, we would walk along Howard Street and along Cotton Row and the Yazoo River where the old cotton businesses were located. He knew a lot of the history of Greenwood and of the early blues men like J. J. Johnson and B. B. King, who lived in the area. My new friend made my week in Greenwood enjoyable.

While I was working in Greenwood, the show played Memphis; Clarksdale, Greenville and Vicksburg, Mississippi; Monroe, Louisiana; and Jackson, Mississippi. The show traveled on the Illinois Central railroad for the dates after Memphis, jumping from 63 to 84 miles.



Emmett Kelly and two members of the Al Uyeno dance troupe in spec wardrobe in 1955. Conover Photographic Collection, courtesy of Bob Cline.



Alfred Burton Sr. and Jr. at Toledo, Ohio on July 4, 1955. The younger Burton, born Alfred Schaefer, Jr., was another close friend of the author's. Sverre O. Braathen photo used with permission from Illinois State University's Special Collections, Milner Library.

Tuesday, November 8, was circus day in Greenwood and Ted came into town to visit me at the store. When I finished my sale at noon we ate lunch at the hotel. Before I checked out Ted enjoyed a warm bath in my room as did several of the ushers who happened to be in town after setup. By early afternoon we hailed cabs to the lot and I checked in with Edna and Theo. I gave Edna all the unsold tickets and Theo the sales receipts and cash. I also turned in my expense account for the Greenwood week.

By late afternoon I was out of Greenwood and on my way to Florence, South Carolina, my next town. The circus made Columbus, Mississippi, 113 miles away and then jumped 124 miles to Birmingham, Alabama, before a 167 mile jump to Atlanta on Friday, November 11, Armistice Day. The show blew the matinee because of a late arrival, even though it was a railroad lot.

On Thursday, November 10, I arrived in Florence. A porter helped me off the train with my Samsonite suitcase and I took a cab to the Hotel Florence. On the cab ride to the hotel, I noticed that Joe Brassil and Clyde Carleton's billing crew had covered the town with circus posters. Because of their efforts everyone knew that the big show was on its way.

I was staying at the Hotel Florence and selling tickets for the November 17 date. It was a quaint hotel with lots of overstuffed chairs and sofas in the lobby, and a massive oak staircase leading to the upper floors. There was a fine cafeteria in the rear of the lobby which had long lines of customers each noon and evening. Their chicken a la king was the best, followed by a large dish of peach cobbler.

Most nights after work I listened to local radio station WOLS, which was owned by Melvin Purvis, a lawyer in town. He was a retired FBI agent and the man who tracked down bank robber John Dillinger. He shot Dillinger as he came out of a movie theater in Chicago on July 22, 1934. This action made Purvis famous and eventually he retired from the Bureau before moving back home to Florence.

As my evenings were free, I had time to introduce myself to the night shift at the station. I was invited to talk about the circus several evenings on the radio, which helped to boost my ticket sales at the drug store. I had dreams of becoming a press agent like Frank Braden or a radio man like Bev Kelley.

On Wednesday, November 16, Twenty-four Hour Man, Red Flanagan arrived in town while I was selling tickets. He was making last minute calls for deliveries of hay, grain, bread, meat, ice, sawdust and other supplies needed at the lot early in the morning of show day. As soon as I closed my ticket sales, I returned to the hotel, hurriedly changed into blue jeans, and he and I drove out to the lot. There he proceeded to lay out the lot, carefully measuring space for the big top, menagerie, side show banner line and tent, horse tops, wardrobe tents, band top and of course the midway. I held the measuring lines and assisted in placing the pins at the designated spots. It was a warm southern day and I really enjoyed working with Red late on that afternoon. It was exciting to take part in the layout process. I was a friend of Red's when he was an usher and later a ticket seller, and it was nice to be working with him again. That night we enjoyed a few beers and a great dinner at the hotel.

In 1955 the world's largest big top was 386' long, and 206' wide. There were four Oregon fir center poles, each 62 feet in length, 20, 47' long aluminum quarter poles, 34, 37' long quarter poles, and 108, 17' long side poles. Over 640 tent and prop stakes were used. The tent weighted fourteen tons when dry. Over 7,000 feet of steel cable was needed for the tent, props, and rigging and over 110,000 feet of rope. Needless to say, the Ringling big top was a massive undertaking to erect each day and tear down late every night. All of this work was directed by George E. Werner, Superintendent of Canvas, and his two assistants Walter E. Bingham and Herman J. Walter. There were over 65 men in the big top crew, most of them black. Without these hard-working men there would have been no circus. At that time they all ate in a segregated section of the cookhouse. This fact was just taken for granted in those days.

The big show arrived on the Atlantic Coast Line on November 17 and was on time.

Alfred Burton and Dieter came to town to do some shopping and to see how their pal Bill was doing. I was pleased to see them and they brought me up to date on show gossip. By 1:30 that afternoon, I had closed the advance sale and was off to the lot to report to Edna and Theo. I had a good advance and I was proud of the work I was doing for the advance ticket department.

After checking in with Edna I went into the side show top to watch some of the performance. I had a visit with Daisy Doll, then with Frieda Pushnik, the armless and legless lady, and her mom, and finally Ricki Richardi, the sword swallower. After that visit, I went out to the end of the side show tent to chat with Joe Trocey and Red Sonnenberg from Prophetstown, Illinois. They were always joking about Mike Healy, the bug man, who specialized in pinning bugs on women with well-endowed chests. This group was always full of stories and fun.

On the evening of November 17, I bid goodbye to the show and boarded an Atlantic



Pinto Del Oro, the great Spanish trapezeist, at Akron, Ohio, July 10, 1955. Sverre O. Braathen photo used with permission from Illinois State University's Special Collections, Milner Library.

Coast Line passenger train for the run to Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. I was to open the advance sale on Saturday, November 19, have a Sunday off and be back at the store on Monday, the 20th. Our show was to play Ft. Lauderdale on Thursday, November 24, Thanksgiving Day. I was looking forward to the festive holiday dinner.

After Florence the show jumped to Charleston, South Carolina on the 18th, Augusta on the 19th, and then had a Sunday off in Savannah, Georgia on November 20. I was not there, but I am sure the eateries in downtown Savannah were busy with circus patrons as were the local movie theaters. Ushers, butchers, and ticket sellers would double up in the local hotels. I also know that some of the women of Savannah were down at the railroad cars selling fried chicken, chicken livers, and corn bread to circus workingmen.

Back at the circus lot in Savannah the big top was up and Side Wall Baldy had the famous trio of flags that had the words "Ringling" "Barnum" and "Bailey" on each, flying proudly, with the American flag flying on pole one. The menagerie was full of elephants, giraffes, and zebras, all busily eating hay and enjoying a day off from performing. Dave Mullaney, a caretaker for the zebras, could be seen sleeping next to his pair of zebras, Gus and Rosy. Over at the two horse tops Harold Miller, head of ring stock, was sitting on the tally ho while looking over all of the ring stock. Like the elephants, the horses were eating their hay and some were rolling in the deep straw bedding, also enjoying a day off. Ring stock men could be found resting beside the pad wagon, some were telling stories, and others were crumbing up using buckets of water filled from the nearby red Ringling Mack water truck.

There were a few town folks walking around the lot and one reserve ticket wagon was open selling seats for the two Monday performances. Luckily, I was in Ft. Lauderdale enjoying a Sunday of rest.

When I arrived in Ft. Lauderdale I took a cab to the Governor's Club Hotel. It was in the very heart of town with fine shops, restaurants and a movie theater nearby. The hotel was built in the 1920s and renamed the Governor's Club in 1947. I had heard that two of its famous guests were Lowell Thomas of radio news fame and the great "Song Bird of the South" Kate Smith. The Orchid Room, off the main lobby, was one of the top dining rooms in Lauderdale.

In the evening, I enjoyed strolling down the local streets and looking at all of the exquisite yachts tied up at the docks. It



*This Valentine Float was part of the Holidays spec on Ringling-Barnum in 1955.
Howard Tibbals Collection, The Ringling Museum.*

was fun to see the inhabitants enjoying meals, drinks, or games of bridge in their comfortable surroundings. It was such a contrast to the crowded Ringling railroad cars. One night I took in a movie called *Desperate Hours* starring Humphrey Bogart with Fredrick March, Arthur Kennedy, and Martha Scott. The film was one of the last Bogart made before his untimely death.

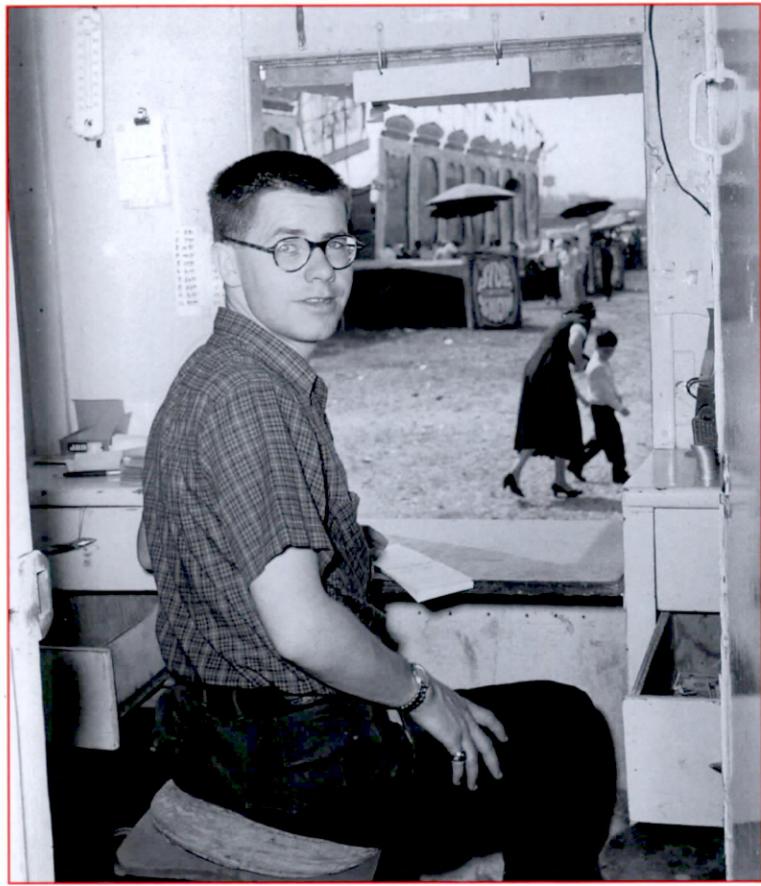
Mr. and Mrs. Bill Fincher stopped in the store to purchase reserved seats from me, and they were kind enough to invite me to their home for dinner. Wow, I thought to myself, I was actually going to be in a real house. I couldn't remember when I had been in a home. I was use to a circus train, restaurants, hotels, and life in a ticket wagon on the show. The Finchers became good friends and I corresponded with them for many years.

While I continued in Ft. Lauderdale, the show played Jacksonville, Florida on November 22, and Daytona Beach on the 23rd. Kinkers and workingmen alike were looking forward to a Thanksgiving dinner the following day.

Before heading to the lot on Thanksgiving Day in Ft. Lauderdale, I was off to the train and found my room in 369 car as I had left it weeks ago in New Iberia. I hung my clothes and soon was ready to head to the lot. I was happy to be back on the show even if it was near the end of the season. Ted Sato and I took Tommy Cropper's late show bus to the lot. I



Pat Lombardo, left, and Gina Moroski in Holidays spec wardrobe, Detroit, July 3, 1955. Sverre O. Braathen photo used with permission from Illinois State University's Special Collections, Milner Library.



Author Bill Taggart in one of the Ringling-Barnum ticket wagons during the 1954 or 1955 season. Note side show banner line and mother brushing off kid in background. Howard Tibbals Collection, The Ringling Museum.

in location. A few town people were on the lot to watch the triumphal return of the big show, and a few punks showed up to spread canvas and earn tickets to the circus. One knew that this was going to be a happy day for workers, performers, musicians, ushers, ticket sellers, lighting crew, and candy butchers, everyone associated with the circus.

Most of all, the menagerie animals, elephants, and horses that had trooped over 17,644 miles with us on the big show knew they were home.

Without them we would not have had or been the 1955 edition of the Greatest Show on Earth. PETA members and supporters will never understand the bond between men and animals, and the love of circus people for their animals. This writer feels so sorry for these ill-advised and frustrated people. I will always cherish the memory of the people and animals that I tramped with during the 1955 season and my efforts in writing about these days so long ago are dedicated to the memory of those men and beasts that made my life worth living. BW

After graduation from Hiram College in Ohio, Bill Taggart worked for Ringling-Barnum from 1953 to 1956. He has previously published accounts of his experience on the show in Bandwagon.

went for my Thanksgiving dinner with Theo, Edna, and Miss Hilda Burkhart and Ted Sato. Curtis, our waiter, served us delicious baked turkey, huge portions of dressing, mashed potatoes, cranberry sauce, and green peas. Freshly baked apple pie was our dessert. At that time, no one could possibly have imagined that this was the last Thanksgiving dinner served by the great Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey cookhouse. That was the case, however, on that sunny, warm November day in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, a day that I will always remember.

From November 25 to 27 we played Miami and late at night many circus folks went out on the town to enjoy the weekend. After Miami the silver show trains headed north to West Palm Beach for two shows.

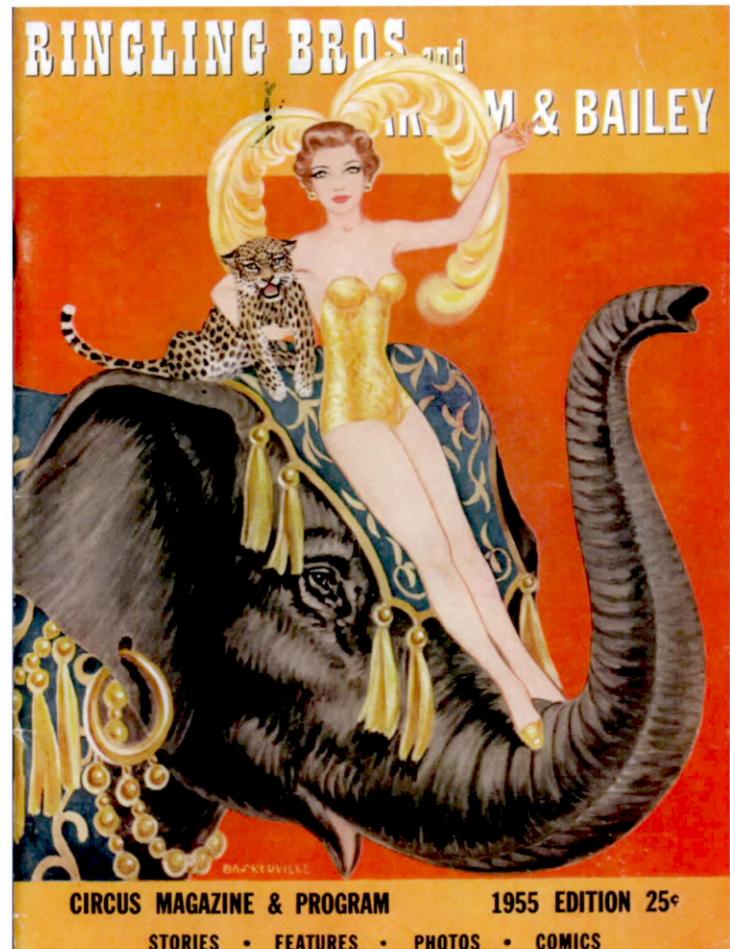
The next jump was 186 miles trek to Orlando for a one day stand.

After that date we headed west across the state to Fort Myers and then north to Lakeland and to St. Petersburg on Friday, December 2.

On Saturday, December 3, we were in Tampa and after the night show Dieter Havemann, Alfred Burton, and I went to the Tampa Theater to see a late night showing of *I'll Cry Tomorrow*, the screen life of actress and singer Lillian Roth. Susan Hayward played Lillian Roth. This will always be one of my favorite films and Lillian Roth a favorite singer.

Finally, on December 4 the three sections of Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey circus trains arrived in beautiful Sarasota and the hard working razorbacks of the train crew immediately started unloading and spotting all the red wagons. Harold Miller's ring stock men unloaded all the horses while bull hands led their wonderful elephants out of their cars.

George Werner's big top crew busily unloaded all the center poles and their rigging while other crews were dropping big top stakes



Ringling-Barnum Circus program cover, 1955. Pfening Archives.

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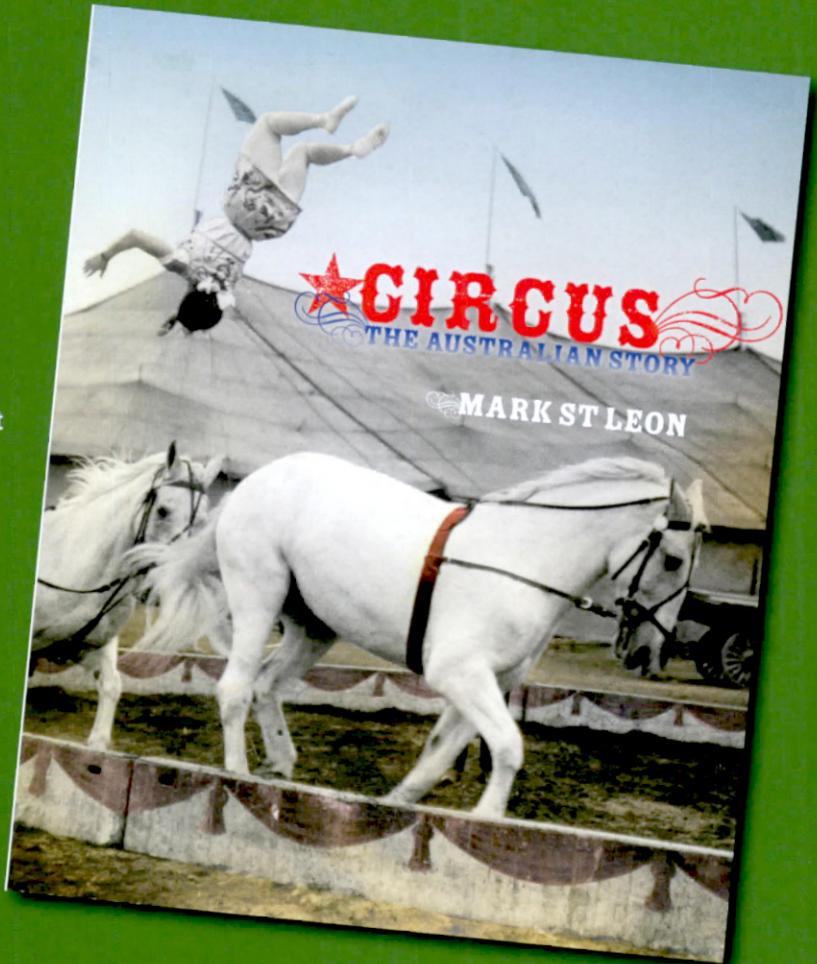
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Swift Motor Trucks Put Circus Back on Roads

Our Machine Age Brings Revolution in Method of Moving Tent Shows in America

by Earl Chapin May

This article originally appeared in the April 1933 issue of Popular Science Monthly. The piece is noteworthy as the source of Charles Sparks' oft-repeated observation: "Any boob can run a circus, but, it takes a wise trouper to know where to put it."

More than thirty circuses this spring will tour the country, moving from town to town in motor trucks. The American circus began its career on country roads in horse-drawn wagons. Later it took to the railroads. Now it is back to first principles and is taking advantage of the modern truck and the modern highway. In this way it has decreased its expenses and increased its mobility.

Though townsmen, that is, non-circus people, are naturally interested only in the performance and the menagerie, a circus owner is always wrestling with his daily "nut" or overhead. With few exceptions he must move his property six times weekly. Motion is the chief characteristic of American circuses. Such a circus, to get



Sam B. Dill Circus cage truck on the lot, probably 1932. Pfening Archives.

into the money, must be getting up and open from early morning until early afternoon. It must be tearing down from 4:30 p.m. until midnight. Between mid-night and early morning it must be making the jump to another stand. Hence one of its heaviest overhead items is transportation.

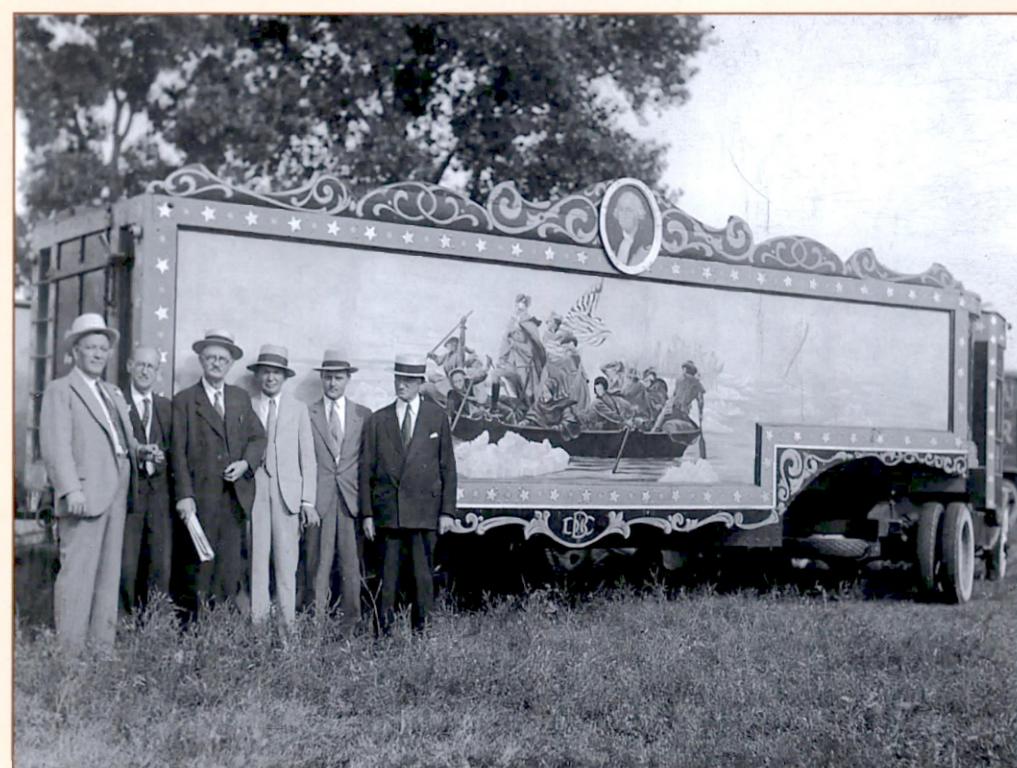
A circus must have three rings to attract paying patronage. Americans disdain a one-ring show. Ten seventy-foot railroad cars are needed to transport the smallest three-ring circus. For a

minimum run of fifty miles the standard railroad ten-car tariff is \$300. This increases to \$1,200, or more, depending upon the number of circus cars and the distance traveled from one stand to the next.

In addition to this a railroad circus must load and unload in local yards, haul its tonnage to and from the lot over city streets, and pay for the privilege. A big show with which I traveled was shaken down in an Illinois town because its eight-ton baggage wagons cracked some discarded manhole covers.

A motorized circus, paying only for motor licenses, except where in a few instances special licenses are required, lands on the lot, exhibits, tears down and goes directly to another pitch. Valuable time and money are thus saved.

Speed and economy are two watchwords on a circus. A railroad show speeds into and out of towns and territories. The mechanical problems of the lot are mastered easily. As the veteran circus owner Charles Sparks once told me while we watched his canvas gang pitching his tents in a driving rain at



Circus executives stand in front of a Downie Bros. baggage semi at Evanston, Illinois in 1932. L to r: Clint Finney, Del Vecchio, Charles McCurren, Frank McGruire, Nat Green, and Bert Rutherford. Harry Atwell photo, Pfening Archives.

Racine, Wisconsin: "Any boob can run a circus, but, it takes a wise trouper to know where to put it."

Unforeseen opposition, twelfth hour revocation of a city license, overnight visitation of an epidemic, prolonged continuance of a drought or flood may compel a circus to switch or change routing. A railroad show can do this more or less readily, with the assistance of friendly railroad officials. But it is not so easy to get two or three advance or billing cars, which are two or three weeks ahead of the show and a thousand miles away from it, on to a new railroad route without losing much time and motion. Sometimes, from the nature of the contract, it is not possible promptly to switch routes.

A few years ago a railroad circus [called Robbins Bros.] owned by Fred Buchanan was caught in a hostile squeeze between two other railroad circuses. One of the rival shows was billing ahead, urging towners to patronize it



The Sam B. Dill Circus exclusively used General Motors trucks such as this one that pulled the elephant trailer. Pfening Archives.



Downie Bros. opening day parade in Macon, Georgia, 1933. The trampoline act performs in the semi-trailer during the march. Eddie Jackson photo, Pfening Archives.

instead of the oncoming Buchanan circus. The other was billing right behind, imploring prospective Buchanan customers to wait for the big show coming later. The two opposition shows split the Buchanan towns between them.

Before Buchanan could get free from this entanglement, he had lost a large bank roll. He was on the rails again last year [1931] but did his advance billing from more mobile motor trucks, which permitted him to switch his railroad routing more rapidly and profitably.

Two years ago [1930], while Sam B. Dill's motorized circus was working westward, his general agent wired back that expected rains had not blessed a drought afflicted region through which the show was routed. Dill wired his agent to switch the route a hundred miles to the south of the stricken region, into territory where crops were good. The Dill advance cars, which were motor trucks, picked up the new route in one day's run, and not a stand was lost because of the switching.

Prior to the opening of the 1930 tenting season, Dill, though a veteran railroad circus executive, was so sold on truck circusing that he purchased fifty two-ton motor trucks on what he describes as a "live-and-let-live basis which I have never regretted."

Between the opening of the tenting season on April 26 at West Baden, Indiana and the season's close on December 6, at Hollywood, California, his circus traveled, exclusively by motor, 14,882 miles. His truck and passenger car equipment was equivalent to a twenty-five car railroad show. The distance traveled compares favorably with a one season's route covered by any railroad show.

Dill made a comparison of transportation cost based on that season's experience. He found that the cost for the daily jump by rail averaged \$905. For exactly the same mileage, the expense of moving by motor truck averaged \$225.50.

This saving of approximately \$650 daily or \$3,900 a week is important to a medium sized circus. One twenty-one mile mountain jump in eastern Tennessee, which would have cost

Dill's circus \$450 if it had been on the rails, cost him only \$75 in gas, oil, tire, and truck accessories.

There is a further advantage in this type of transportation. After the motorized circus has exhibited, and everything is torn down and packed, all hands go to sleep in bungalow cars equipped with lavatories, clothes presses, and radios, or in private tents if they prefer them to house cars.

I know from experience that sleeping on the lot is much more restful than in Pullmans where two in a berth and two berths high is the trouper rule, except for stars or executives. I have trudged many weary miles through dark, strange streets hunting the train after the night show and have lost many an hour of sleep looking for my Pullman in railroad yards. Last season a truck circus made my summer hometown in Connecticut. After the night show some

Kentucky during April and was in Indiana and Ohio the first half of May. Our good roads program has helped truck showmen solve their transportation problems.

According to H. S. Fairbank, director of publications and information for the United States Bureau of Public Roads, the mileage of hard surfaced roads in this country is now in excess of 467,300 miles.

Although a few states have recently enacted laws which require motor trucks and passenger cars to take out local state licenses when entering these states, more than thirty states grant full reciprocity, while other states have set a time limit within which circuses can exhibit without taking out local licenses for their motorized equipment.

Tennessee has recently enacted a law that makes the license



Appropriately sitting atop a truck advertising itself, the Downie Bros. side show band readies for parade in 1932. William Koford photo, Pfening Archives.

of the band boys dropped in to see me. When we reached the lot an hour later all lights were out and all the troupers were asleep.

Up early in the morning for a hearty cook-house breakfast, all hands are away soon after daylight in their modern circus caravan. All hands include the riding elephants, horses, and ponies. At the rear of this colorful procession is the service car. If a car is stalled, its load is hurried to the next stand by the service car, which then returns and repairs the stalled car.

Most of these motorized circuses move as rapidly as railroad shows. The Downie Bros. Three Ring Wild Animal Circus, for example, opened last season at Atlanta, Georgia, April 20 and 21; showed Louisville, Kentucky, April 28 and 29, and pitched its tents at Akron, Ohio, May 9 and Canton, Ohio, May 10. Dill's Circus opened at Texarkana, Texas, April 16; exhibited at Little Rock, Arkansas, a few days later, and at Memphis; Tennessee, April 21. Barnett Bros. Circus toured North Carolina, Tennessee, and

cost for motor trucks almost prohibitive. This state has also fixed 20,000 pounds as the maximum gross load weight of any vehicle on four wheels; eight feet as the maximum load width, excepting for farmer tractors; twelve feet as the maximum height; thirty-five feet as the maximum vehicle length; forty-five feet as the maximum length for truck and trailer; 650 pounds as the limit per inch of tire width concentrated on the road surface; and 18,000 pounds as the load limit on any axle. Owners of motorized circuses are building equipment to meet local regulations or are avoiding states in which there are such unusual laws.

Loss of circus exhibition causes local losses. During three weeks in Montana, one motorized circus bought 6,000 gallons of gasoline, 100 gallons of oil, paid \$1,800 for local licenses, \$1,800 for local advertising, and \$1,800 for perishable food. Thus you see it is not all profit in the circus business, but vast sums of money are left behind in the various towns, as the show moves on to the next lot.

Motorized circus owners are shrewd and thrifty managers. They have worked out many ways of saving time and money. For example, they cover their wild animal cages with canvas tarpaulins during their journeys from town to town. Once on the lot these tarpaulins are dropped, and the cages are open for towners' inspection during the grand free street parade.

Also for the parade, the sides of many baggage trucks disappear and gaily spangled circus men and women appear on red and gold floats, all in accordance with circus tradition. As for the horse and pony trucks, when they reach the lot the tail-board is dropped, and down this gangplank come the animals, much as they used to come out of railroad stock cars.

Motorized circus owners have displayed acumen in saving money formerly spent in billing wars and other kinds of expensive

their sleep between performances, these inconveniences have their compensations.

Big circuses must always travel by rail. Whole fleets of trucks could not transport them. Yet John Ringling has only four of his amusement institutions on the rails this year [1932]—the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey, which moves a hundred miles or more each night on its ninety steel cars seventy or eighty feet in length; the Hagenbeck-Wallace, on thirty-five cars, and the Al G. Barnes and Sells-Floto on thirty cars, each. This arrangement leaves more room, more towns of good size, for the modern, motorized circus caravans.

The ever increasing number of these twentieth century circuses play over familiar routes to familiar audiences in towns and cities of from 500 to 15,000 population. Primarily they serve rural



The Sam B. Dill big show band poses before parade, probably 1932. Note advertisement for gasoline used by show on side of band trailer.
Pfening Archives.

and useless opposition. In the golden age of railroad circuses, advertising wars were annually popular. Opposition paper was covered by rival billposting gangs who often resorted to fist fights and worse. When John Ringling became the overlord of railroad circuses, billposting fights were unnecessary. His shows are routed to avoid competing with each other.

Troupers take to motorized circusing because it is gypsying in the modern manner and at heart all troupers are gypsies. Driving circus trucks or passenger cars is just one part of a happy day. They make a game of watching for the circles, arrows, and other marks chalked on roadside telephone poles and post to guide their caravan from stand to stand—for the road is railed, that is, marked, with chalk these days.

This gypsying in the modern manner is high adventure for most troupers. Though an all night pack up jump is sometimes necessary, and members of the circus company must catch up with

communities, hence they become family affairs for professional as well as town people. During many years prior to her recent demise, Mollie Bailey's Circus made the same towns in Texas and annually gathered paying patronage by merely announcing in post offices and stores that "Aunt Mollie's Coming."

Thanks to the advent of automobiles, motor trucks, and trailers, the circus, which had its beginning in America under the patronage of President George Washington and has been delighting American children of all ages for two centuries, has come back to the country road of our fathers and is annually brightening the lives of townfolk and villagers. BW

*Earl Chapin May's (1873-1960) numerous circus articles in popular magazines in the 1920s and 1930s are a treasure trove to the historian. He wrote *The Circus from Rome to Ringling* in 1932. His papers are at the Circus World Museum in Baraboo, Wisconsin.*

A Community on Wheels

A Reporter Penetrates into the Mysteries of Circus Life.

The following article originally appeared in the Sacramento (California) Daily Record-Union on September 7, 1880.

The man is yet to be found, who, speaking the honest truth, will assert that there lingers in his memory no delightful recollections of the boyhood days when the advent of the circus bill-poster did not sharpen his expectation to keenest edge, and the arrival of the circus itself crown the ambition of his highest hopes. Those who are possessed of that peculiar trait which enables them to enjoy mental laughter and silly merriment, have a royal feast of selfish mirth when the circus season comes round, in watching the struggles of mature men to pass the glaring posters by; and when the tent is finally up, to observe the studied carelessness and nonchalance with which they saunter in—early, and the air of indifference with which they seek to cover the eager desire to secure the best vantage point

of view.

In their hearts they are cursing the state of manliness which deprives them of the exquisite pleasure of crawling beneath the canvas, of dashing into the ring and enjoying a ride on the elephant's back, or of being one of the contestants for the \$10 offered the successful rider of the trained mule. In their souls they berate the luck of life which forbids them to sit in the dust at the edge of the ring, to throw up their hats and shout in exuberance of enjoyment over the sallies of the clown, or linger about the tent when the performance is over, and in the dim light of the flaring and smoking torches, mark the expedition with which the canvas men take down, roll up and pack away the structure that so little a time before was a veritable castle of wonder and a tower of delight.

The advent of the circus season brings to mind some of the fondest recollections of boyhood days. Old greybeards may frown and shake their wise heads and pooh-pooh the matter as they will, but if they are half the men they pretend to be they will be honest with themselves and admit that they are glad of it, and mean to be there when the "round top" is up; intend to have a front seat and a good one; intend to laugh whenever opportunity affords occasion; to make merry over the stale jokes of the down and take in all the twists of the contortionists and flip-flops of the tumblers; to applaud the intelligence of the horses; to buy the jester's 10-cent song book, and admire the well-proportioned legs and rounded busts of the airy-skirted damsels who float about the magic ring, smile on the



just and unjust alike, and kiss their hands by rule with angelic grace to the multitude twice a day for a regular salary.

The lovers of the old time circus care very little for its history. That the Circus Maximus was one of the most magnificent structures of Rome, where games and races and shows of different kinds were held, is a matter of mere historical importance to them. They do not care to know, indeed, except for the worth of historical knowledge, that the circus is one of the oldest of earth's institutions, and flourished in ancient Alexandria and Athens, delighted the solemn senators of Rome, and drew to its amphitheater the sages of Jerusalem. They care little for the fact that the points of resemblance between the circus founded by Trajan and completed by Constantine, and the canvased enclosure of these days are very few and far between—it is the circus of the time they have to deal with; it is the circus of their youth which they compare with the exhibition of 1880, and nearly always to the disadvantage of the latter, because boyhood's recollections are so much sweeter than manhood's realities. These considerations, these recollections, led a representative of the *Record-Union* whom chance threw into a country town a few days ago, where all the population for twenty miles around had assembled in holiday attire to worship one day at the circus shrine—these thoughts, as he stood at the tent door and saw the eager crowds flock in, induced him to make some inquiry into the modern circus and menagerie which the advent of a new one into California last week makes a subject of current interest.

The result is deemed of sufficient importance to give to the public in the form of this article. And while to the suspicious reader it will appear as a puff for W. W. Cole's circus and menagerie, yet conscientious journalists will recognize in it one of those peculiar and frequent situations wherein personal advantage is gained by the party "written up," because of the news quality his business possesses. But as to that the public has little concern.

It is the journalist's business to instruct and entertain the reader, and just now the judgment is reflected in this column that a glance behind the scenes of circus life will prove of interest and convey some useful information and correct some erroneous ideas. There are few men and women who do not care to step upon the stage and inquire into the inner life of the actor, few who are not interested in the strange and mystic life of the player, and few who are not ready to receive information upon popular topics at any time, even if it shall present to them a special business in a strong light. We have had upon this coast numerous circus and menagerie exhibitions. The public has not forgotten that royal jester Cooke, nor is its memory dull concerning Chiarini and his splendid stud of trained horses; good old John Wilson and his old-fashioned circus; Zoyara,

The Courier Company of Buffalo printed this woodblock poster for W. W. Cole in 1880. This type of advertising was popular in the early 1880s, then faded away. Note massive amount of text on bill. Circus World Museum Collection.



The Courier Company, Buffalo, N.Y., Show Printing House, the Largest in the World; *Circus World Museum Collection*

who bewildered the popular mind as to the sex of the performer wearing that nom de plume; North & Co. and their old-time circus in days when "pad riding" was something fine, and bare-back riding a rarity, and the daring sensation of the day—and by the way, Lee & Marshall were the circus people who built the Metropolitan Theater in this city. It was then an amphitheater and gaily caparisoned horses cavorted and the half-naked acrobats flew through the air where now bald-headed and sober-sided citizens sit in the parquet to gain a better view of the trim ankles and natty feet of pretty actresses; and citizens of Sacramento will likewise remember that in the year 1873 there came into this city by rail what was known as the New Orleans and New York Menagerie and Equestrian Exhibition, and that it made on our streets a grand parade and frightened half the horses in town out of their animal wit with an excruciatingly ear piercing calliope. It was no little surprise to the reporter to recognize under the more modest title of W. W. Cole's Circus and Menagerie in the pleasant town of Chico last week the identical show which was the first of its kind to cross the continent by rail and which gave such satisfaction when here in 1873. Mr. Cole was found to be a youthful and a reticent man. He was willing enough to "chalk" the newspaper man's hat but unwilling enough to talk, more especially about himself. But some of his employees were less retiring, and though aware of the strong desire of their principal not to be forced into public view prominently, and his aversion to being the subject of a newspaper article, nevertheless they were unable to resist the blandishments of reportorial skill, and were led to indulge in chit-chat which, when they see it in print, will open their eyes wide and wider in the astonishment they must feel that so much of real information was wormed out of them despite their best efforts to say little.

Because it is with us and is soon to exhibit here, and because it is representative of an important business, in which hundreds of thousands of dollars are invested; because it is one of the foremost of animal and circus shows and thoroughly representative of its class, Mr. Cole's "big show," his Congress of Wonders, his electric light, giants, elephants, lions and trained stallions, his agents, employees and actors are taken as texts for an article that is intended to inform the public of something of the inner life of the circus.

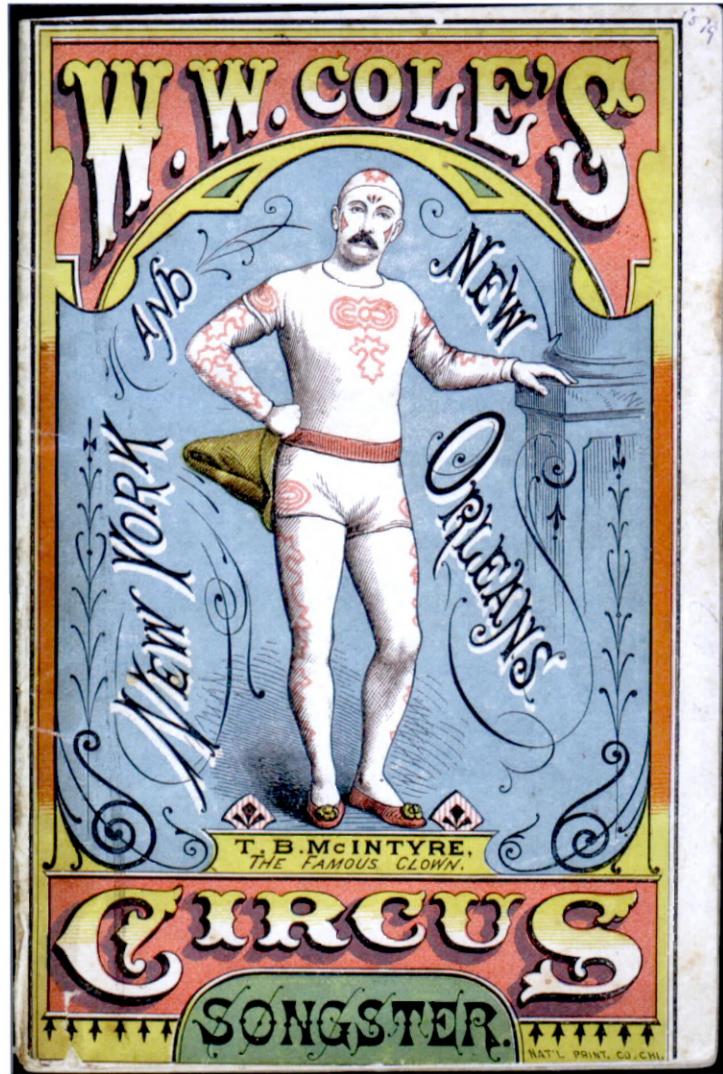
Advertising herald distributed by the W. W. Cole Circus for its May 11, 1880 engagement at Dayton, Ohio. Pfening Archives.

Entering the menagerie as exhibited at Chico last week, the visitor found himself in a very lofty tent—150 feet in length and 75 feet in width—lighted by four burners of the Brush dynamic electric light, which burn, by the way, with a steadiness not known to our citizens, who saw a year ago the flickering light exhibited here in Fair week. And first, as to this light; it is observed that in a tent opening off the larger one, stands the Brush motor, operated by a forty-horse-power steam engine, the whole apparatus being mounted upon a very heavy, broad-track truck, which is so ponderous as to require no less than fourteen horses to draw it to and from the tent to the car. In a quiet chat with the engineer it is ascertained that eight other electric lights are burning about the center poles in the circus tent adjoining, and that the capacity of the motor is sixteen lights, and that it is a fact that San Francisco uses more electric lights today than any other city in the world save only Paris and London. It is noted that the lights are exhibited in all their painful brilliancy, without the intervention of shades or ground glass globes, which are ordinarily used to soften the light. Inquiry as to this evolves the reply that in many country places the people actually questioned the fact of there being any electric lights in the exhibition at all, as the shades hid the carbons of the burners, and Cole has been compelled to remove the globes in order to convince Rusticus that in fact and in truth there is a light there shining, fed by neither fluid nor gas, and in which the medium of a wick play no part.

A view of the animals is the next in order, and with the aid of the mystic signs known only to the fraternity, the reporter places himself in communication with George Conklin, the animal trainer, and the circuit of the tent is made under his direction, the press representative being accorded the dangerous and complimentary distinction of walking between the "barrier ropes" and the cages of the ferocious beasts that would a little sooner than not gobble up a newspaper man for luncheon. The cages, it is to be noted, are large, ornamental and strong, and this latter quality determines the reporter to risk his precious scalp within the dead line.

First in order is the mandrill or man monkey, a huge Brazilian ape of the largest species, who answers to Conklin's call of "Jim, come here," and grins in delight at attentions shown him. He has for a companion a small dog, the latter serving to worry him and keep his dander up for the amusement of the sight-seeker. Next is the giant kangaroo of Australia, a meek enough appearing animal, but which can defend itself valiantly when attacked.

Next is shown an African lion born in Hayward in this State,



T. B. McIntyre, shown here on the cover of his 1879 songster, was the talking clown on W. W. Cole in 1880. Pfening Archives.

six years ago. It is a cross-eyed lion; in fact, it has a fearful attack of strabismus, and glares two or three ways at one and the same time, and for this reason is useless as a performing lion, and hence Columbus, as he is called, is left to his cage, where he makes leaps back and forth that result in rough knocks for his nob, as he always

miscalculates his distances. Then comes the emu of New Zealand, a placid and handsome animal; the Albino deer of Madagascar, a beauty, and then an Asiatic lioness weighing nearly 500 pounds, four years old, and the largest ever known in captivity. Next is a diminutive, uninteresting specimen of the cinnamon bear, and next an East India antelope—a handsome creature. Nearby are two, three and four-horned sheep—odd products of nature, but presentable chaps with their many horns. Then comes a very handsome leopard, one whose beautiful hide would make a rug that all the ladies would pronounce "so charming." This animal breeds in captivity, as does the lion and tiger, and most of the cat family.

The next cage contains boa constrictors, an anaconda and several pythons, and behind the glass wall is seen a coal back negro uncoiling the living, twisting mass of serpentine vitality, and handling the great reptiles in the most careless manner.

"Is not that fellow in danger?"

"Oh, no," replies Conklin, "he gets bit up now and then but I always cure him."

"What! Cure him?"

"Certainly. These reptiles are not venomous. They kill by crushing. It is the cobra that has poisonous fangs."

And now one of the 650 feet of serpents lifts up its flat head and opens its mouth and darts in lightning-like motions its fiery red and forked tongue from its jaws, back and forth, and finally fastens upon a fluttering pigeon nearby, and begins to swallow the bird, bill, claws, feathers and all—whole, and as it goes down the "snake-charmer" catches a second pigeon and pushes it after the first, and Conklin declares his belief that the snake would continue to take pigeons in that fashion 'till he was stuffed with pigeon from end to end like a sausage. Leaving this repellent exhibition, instructive as it may be, though the beholder can't but think as he looks on, of the Devil and the curse of God that sent his satanic majesty crawling on his belly, the visitor is next shown a den of lions, Asiatic by birth, three in number, and weighing 700 pounds each.

"Do you fear these fellows?"

"Well, yes and no. I must make them fear me, or I need to fear them," replies Conklin.

"You perform with them?"

"Twice a day."

"You treat them kindly?"

"Not by a long shot. They have been conquered by the application of red-hot iron bars, and finally by the loaded whip. Any one of

Sea Elephants!

Animals that were supposed to be extinct. THE GREATEST WONDERS YET DISCOVERED.

THE ONLY \$25,000 FEATURES

The capture and subsequent addition of these phenomenal amphibious monsters to my great shows is something worthy of more than a passing word of praise. These Oceanic Marvels have long been supposed extinct, and it has been questioned by scientists as to whether they ever existed, but the fortunate circumstances which led to the discovery and capture of these rare specimens of the hidden treasures of the deep, and which have heretofore been excluded from the inquisitive eyes of man, leads us to assume a pardonable pride in heralding the event with more than ordinary gusto.

THE MAMMOTH KANSAS OX: 6 FEET HIGH

NO EXTRA CHARGE

THE LARGEST ON EARTH 3100 LBS.

REMEMBER, TO BE SEEN ONLY IN

W. W. COLE'S

Concorporated Shows!

NOT UNTIL

Tuesday, May 11th

ONE TICKET Admits to ALL

NO EXTRA CHARGE TO VIEW THE

MONSTROUS SEA ELEPHANTS

THE GREAT ELECTRIC LIGHT SHOW.

Indianapolis Journal Company, Bullock and Shaw Printers.

them would catch me up at any time but for the fear they have for me, and that fear I keep alive by blows and punishment. The affection and kind-hearted theory wouldn't save your life two minutes." It is a large cage and the lions are splendid fellows, and Conklin boasts loudly of their beauty and worth. Nearby is a big ox, not so large as the pictorial representations would lead one to expect, for something must be allowed for the exaggerated expressions of that wonderful man, whoever he may be, who originates the matter that appears on circus and menagerie bills. His fancy is unbounded, his imagination without limit, his veracity of the most elastic kind, his rhetoric the wonder of the world, his grammar the astonishment of all linguists—but the ox is a "whopper" nevertheless, and he is a gentle and fat chap and weighs 3,100 pounds, and makes one reflect upon the superior steaks that "John's" carcass would yield.

Eleven camels are next seen, chewing the cud of reflection and wondering among themselves what on earth all these people are staring at, and like all deformities, unaware of their cruelly ugly shapes and imagining themselves probably the "prettiest birds" in all the show.

Next comes a fierce-looking wild boar of Germany, a glance at whose nozzle carries one back to the memories of the ancient hunting era, when kings and courtiers followed the boar with spear and hound, and not infrequently fell before his ferocious tusks.

Next to be seen [are] two hippopotamus hogs, and near by the wild yak of Tartary and four Asiatic elephants, three of which went on a tramping tour of their own up in Nevada county, and were captured only after a long and tiresome chase of many days.

Next to these is the sacred ox of India, an animal with its back up permanently, and which has for its constant companion a rather homely goat. Next in order is the two-horned black rhinoceros, and a splendid specimen he is, and then a baby monkey, born at Virginia City August 23rd, and clinging to its mother's body and resisting all attempts to remove it. Next in line is a ten-year old African lioness and two spotted hyenas of Africa; a zebra, capable of domestication, says Conklin; a Brazilian tiger, a fierce-looking and quarrelsome fellow; the silver lion or panther of California, a cage of white silver crown cockatoos, a cage of rose cockatoos, and an apartment filled with pigeons, which are fattening as food for the serpents already described. Another baby monkey, born April 1st; Frank, a

Reverse side of 1880 Cole herald for Dayton date. Pfening Archives.



The Vulcan who Forges Thunderbolts
FOR FLIMSY IMITATORS

At DAYTON,
NOT UNTIL
TUESDAY, MAY 11

Undisputed Monarch OF THE Road

W. W. COLE'S

New and Massive Shows

THE MOST STUPENDOUS!
THE MOST MAGNIFICENT!
THE MOST ENTERPRISING!

DARING AND DAUNTLESS

IN ALL THINGS.

AT AN EXPENSE OF Twenty Thousand Dollars

There has been secured, for the season of 1879,

— FOR —

W. W. COLE'S

Great New-York & New Orleans Shows

The Two Greatest Curiosities in Existence.

*The Tallest Man and Woman on the Face of the Earth,
Each of whom are (lacking only 1-2 inch)*

8 FEET HIGH!

THE TWO GIANTS, MAN AND WIFE,

CAPT. & MRS. M. V. BATES,

Who, having recently returned from Europe, are now for the first time on Exhibition in this Country.

HUMAN WONDERS, MARVELOUS CURIOSITIES,

They are the Greatest People since Goliah's day. Capt. Bates is 32 years of age, wears a No. 9 hat, a 26 collar, a 15 boot.

Measures 62 inches around the chest;
is 7 feet 11½ inches high.

Mrs. Bates is 27 years of age. Height, 7 feet 11½ inches. The Combined Weight, One-half Ton.

For further particulars see Pamphlet containing full history of these, the

TWO LARGEST PEOPLE IN THE WORLD.

Both are well proportioned, good looking, highly cultured. They will be exhibited, together with many other novelties.

IN THE MAIN TENT OF

W. W. Cole's Great New-York & New Orleans Circus

MENAGERIE and CONGRESS of LIVING WONDERS.

One Ticket Admits to Circus, Menagerie and Giants.

(See other side.)

Captain and Mrs. Bates were highly advertised by W. W. Cole in 1880. Both the front and back of the card at left which measures 3¹³/₁₆ by 7³/₁₆ are shown here full size. Pfening Archives.

mischiefous two-year-old monkey, and Abe, a one-year-old chap. Then comes the children's delight, the happy family, consisting of a cage of ant-eaters, monkeys, foxes and dogs.

Next is shown a Hoosier monkey, born at Vincennes, Ind., May 6th. Then comes the quarrelsome family, consisting of hairless dogs, monkeys, a coyote and the ape Bolivar. The commotion this assortment keeps up fully justifies the name given to the group. Nearby is the baboon ape, a rascally, mischievous fellow. In an adjacent cage is a Senegal leopard, a vicious beast, with which Conklin says he can do nothing. Next to him is a splendid eight-year-old specimen of the Royal Bengal tiger, which despite his apparent ferocity is the best-natured animal in the menagerie.

Conklin tells the writer that he has been fifteen years an animal trainer, eight of which he has passed with Mr. Cole. An attendant relates how at Frankfort one of the lions killed its keeper and Conklin the same afternoon entered that lion's cage and whipped and conquered the brute.

It is gleaned also that the elephants were bought in Hamburg, that the larger one is vicious and knocks people right and left sometimes, and while the reporter turns to watch the seal lion, which lives well in captivity, and has been sporting in this closed tank for three years, Conklin relates that the only instance of an elephant breeding in America of which he has knowledge was that of the Philadelphia elephant of some years ago. As to the food of his pets, Conklin says the carnivorous, or "meat animals," consume 125 pounds of beef per day; the elephants get away with ever so much hay and grain, while the monkeys consume vegetables and the odds and ends of the table. The man monkey is the dainty fellow. He gets rice pudding daily with a liberal supply of raisins. The sea lion demands 25 pounds of fish daily.

Passing from this tent, the visitor encounters Captain M. V. Bates and wife, who are veritable giants, and loom up above men as men do above children. Bates is 7 feet 11½ inches high, and weighs 478 pounds. His wife is the same height, and weighs 413 pounds. This giant pair constitute a curiosity well worth the seeing, and are a social couple with whom it is worthwhile to hold a little chat. He is a native of Kentucky, and she is from Nova Scotia—a veritable "Blue Nose." Moving on toward the circus, whither all the crowd is now

NERVE and ENERGY

MONEY AND BRAINS

Sufficient to Sweep the Senile and Faded Factors into utter oblivion.

BEHOLD THE AVALANCHE!

Steer Clear of False Lights, when the Compass of Common Sense points directly at

25 FEATURES!

- 1st Feature, the Great Electric Light.
- 2d Feature, the 2 Giants, Capt. Bates & wife.
- 3d Feature, Great \$15,000 Trick Stallions.
- 4th Feature, the Mammoth Kansas Ox.
- 5th Feature, the Only Living Sea Elephants.
- 6th Feature, the Champion Leaping Horse.
- 7th Feature, only Performing Spanish Bull.
- 8th Feature, Team of 12 Huge Dromedaries.
- 9th Feature, 25 Beautiful Educated Horses.
- 10th Feature, a School of Monstrous Sea Lions.
- 11th Feature, an Oceanic Aquarium.
- 12th Feature, a Den of 6 Performing Lions.
- 13th Feature, the Great Trial Bicyclist.
- 14th Feature, 100 French & American Artists.
- 15th Feature, Representatives of all Nations.
- 16th Feature, Gardner, the Champion Leaper.
- 17th Feature, Five Famous & Funny Clowns.
- 18th Feature, 6 first-class Bare-Back Riders.
- 19th Feature, Claire Sisters, Female Acrobats.
- 20th Feature, a Herd of Ponderous Elephants.
- 21st Feature, 30 Dens of Rare Animals.
- 22d Feature, the Giant Mandrill Monkey.
- 23d Feature, the Only Tableaux Stallions.
- 24th Feature, the Grandest Street Parade.
- 25th Feature, the Best Show on Earth.

ONE VAST CONCLAVE

The World has never produced its like. It Towers Above all Moving Things. Wait for it! Watch for it! Watch and Wait! one Good Thing is worth more than Twenty Shoddy Structures.

Not Until Tuesday, May 11th,

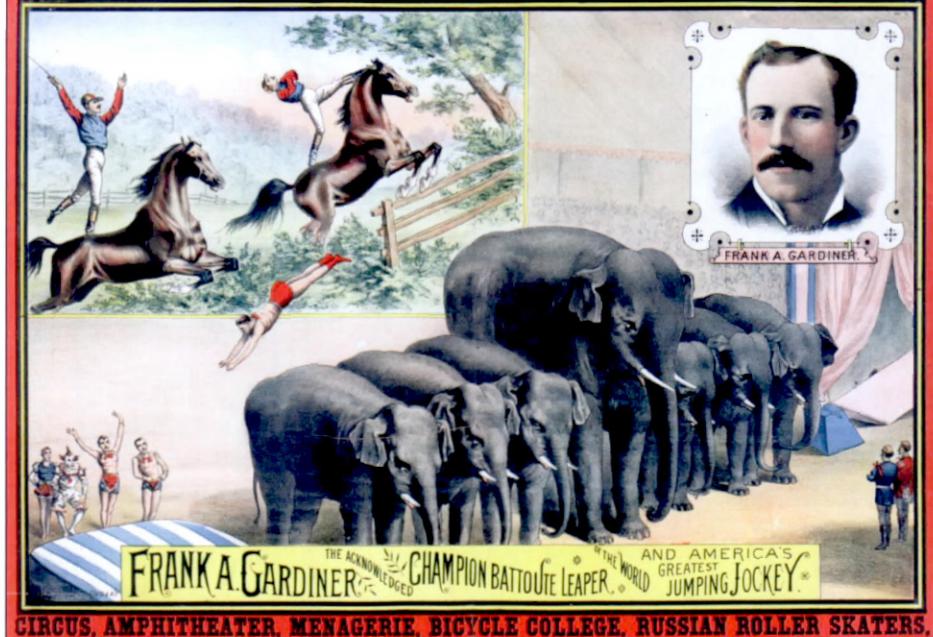
Only One Ticket Required to All Advertised Shows

No Extra Charge to the Giants

Admission, 50 Cts. Children, 25 Cts.

Indianapolis Journal Company, Railroad and Shaw Printers.

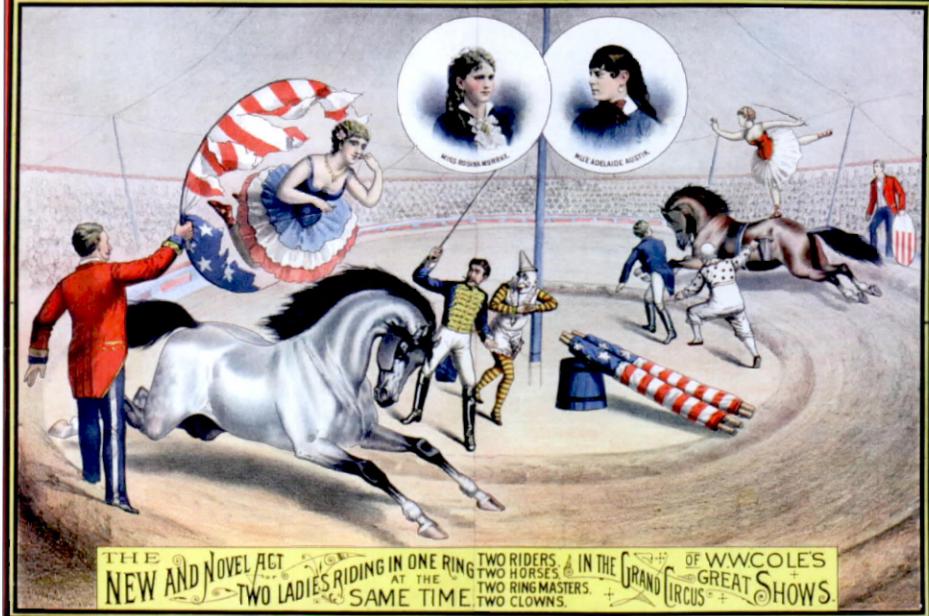
W.W.COLES NEW 9 SHOWS CONSOLIDATED.



Frank Gardiner, the great leaper, appeared on W. W. Cole in 1880, and again in 1882 when Strobridge printed this one sheet poster. Cincinnati Art Museum Collection.

tending, the visitor passes the calliope, the splendidly decorated band chariot, drawn by two horses and ten camels, the seven beautiful tableaux cars, and the two four-horse Roman chariots, each drawn by four milk-white horses driven by ladies, and the clowns' carriage, all of which appear in the street parade with the animal cages and mounted acrobats, tumblers, leapers and other artists of the concern, for this parade business is one of the chief

W.W.COLES NEW 9 SHOWS CONSOLIDATED.



Adelaide Austin was the featured female bareback rider on W. W. Cole in 1880. In 1882 she appeared on this Strobridge one sheet lithograph for Cole along with Rosina Murray. Cincinnati Art Museum Collection.

features of the well-ordered modern circus, and is no more to be omitted than the show itself.

Entering the circus tent, with its 42-foot central ring, its length is found to be 200 feet, with a width of 100 feet and extra center pieces, rendering it capable of extension to 400 feet of length, when its full capacity is equal to accommodating 8,000 people. Beyond are the dressing-rooms, under a 100-foot round-top tent, and still beyond long lines of tents where are kept the horses, and in one is maintained the boarding-house of the establishment.

As to the circus, it is not the purpose to go into details of the programme; some of its main features must suffice. Everything is rapidly done, and there are no long waits—indeed, no waits at all. There is the usual Grand Entry, and then follows the cotillion on horseback, admirably performed, by the way, to the musical beat of an excellent brass and reed band. A Spanish bull is introduced which does many neat tricks, and is said to have been more difficult to train than any horse known, but Wm. Organ, the trainer, finally conquered him. A leaping corps of twelve men comes next, and such leaping has never before been attempted in California.

They fly over horses and elephants in great number, and turn in midair and alight with wonderful agility. Two of the men are especially noticeable, Harry Long, who leaps over an elephant, on a pedestal by which he is standing fifteen feet high, and eight camels, making a distance of thirty-five feet; and the other, Frank Gardiner, the champion leaper of the world, who throws a double somersault over five elephants and six camels, the central elephant being elevated to a height of fifteen feet. Conklin enters the den of lions, forces them to play with him—a thrilling exhibition—and the spectator with nerves is very thankful that it is a brief one. Organ then introduces the beautiful trick stallion, Humboldt, a splendid leaper, and a very knowing animal, that excites the admiration of the beholder.

Adelaide Austin, a graceful bareback rider, is a prominent attraction—and it is to be noted as one of the advances of the modern circus that in all this show no "pad riding" was seen; it was all bareback, flesh and bones, stand-up-or-go-down business—and all the horses are full-fleshed, steady on the track as a clock, responsive to the rider's every motion, sleek and graceful, handsome and well-kept, winning the praise of horsemen and creating some surprise that horses could be so well kept that live nearly all the time upon a railway train. McIntyre and Pico are the clowns who appear, the one a rather poetical and studied jester, the other a rollicking pantomimist. Not much of the business of the evening is given to the clowns; what they have to say has to be forced in, for action and rapidity appears to be the rule with the equestrian director. The triple horizontal bars—Dunbar

and the Reno brothers—is especially pleasing, and one of the Renos makes the act very amusing by his grotesque performance.

Six trained stallions out of nine are introduced, and are, in fact, the card of the circus. They answer to such names at Organ's call as "King," "Duke," "Emperor," "Prince," etc., and do in concert all the tricks usually shown with one horse, and some that are entirely new, very novel and exceedingly difficult—realizing fully the glowing announcements and apparently improbable pictorial promises of the bills of the show. Indeed, these sleek, handsome and powerful animals are a show in themselves. Maggie Claire is a daring performer upon a perpendicular rope, and quite deserves the nom de plume she has assumed of "Queen of the Air." Barclay, the bareback rider, is thorough. The three Livingstons are skilled acrobats, and Frank Gardiner is the champion rider as an English jockey, doing in the act some wonderful leaping from ground to saddle. O'Dale is another bareback rider, in an act in which he rides and manages six horses with a skill that is only equaled by the wonderful flexibility of his gartered legs, which seem capable of stretching over a whole regiment of cream-colored horses. The trained ponies, in a game of see-saw, introduced by Mr. Cooke, are curiosities, as are also two running ponies following two of the camels that are introduced. Besides, there are the three bicycle riders, the silent steed being run by one upon a 60-foot wire stretched in mid-air, while the others perform upon a swinging trapeze suspended from the hub of the wheel—altogether a difficult, novel and break-neck act, and wholly new to the circus business.

These are the chief features noticeable in this railroad circus, and which like all others are fully up to the promise of the bills, and that in itself is a fact worthy of record and acclaim among men.

Behind the Scenes

But behind the scenes a moment the reader must be taken and shown the inside of circus life to a degree, and these are the facts stated in briefest form which were gleaned from the officers and attaches of Cole's establishment, which is taken now as thoroughly representative of the business. Connected with each exhibition as employees are nearly 200 people, 140 of whom are laborers. But beside these are many others.

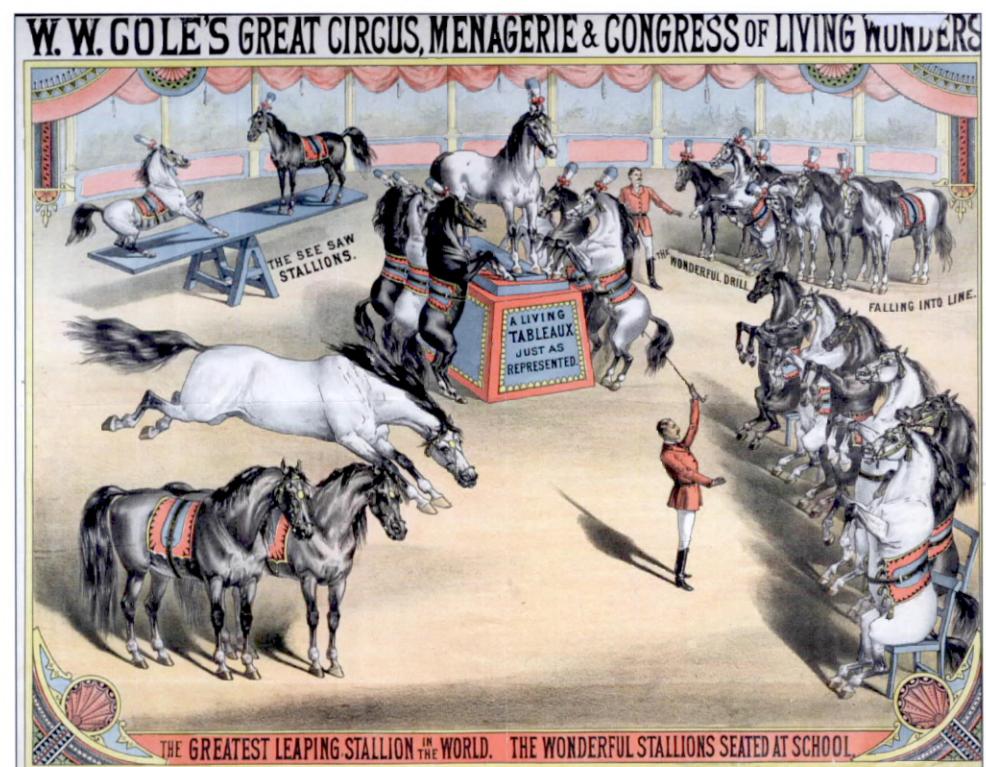
At the head is Mr. Cole, who is sole manager, having as his close counselor his mother, one of the original Cooke family of England, all of whom were skilled artists and thorough circus people. The heads of departments, after the manager, may be mentioned in this order: Treasurer, John D. Evans, occupying an admirably arranged and ornamental office on wheels. Equestrian manager, T. McIntyre; head canvas man, Charles Wicks; head hostler and veterinary surgeon; John Lanbright, who has under him fifty men; master of transportation, A. McArthur, who has full charge of the loading and movement of the train.

The master of the wardrobe. Horse trainer, William Organ. The steward and cook and their assistants. The "layer out," the man who deals with the hotels and disposes of the actors in towns and cities.

The postmaster, who attends wholly to the delivery and posting of the mail matter of the troupe and does other special tasks.

The press agent, A. E. Richards, who deals with newspapermen and has charge of one portion of the advertising. The electrician, engineer and fireman. The chandelier and lamp man, with one assistant. The saddler and blacksmith, each with one assistant. Captain Bates and wife, the giants of the troupe, who entertain visitors to the menagerie.

Chief doorkeeper, Henry Cooke, uncle to Mr. Cole, and an old veteran in the circus business. He has two assistants. The head usher, with three assistants. The musical director, A. D. Good, with fourteen men. George Conklin, the "head animal" man—such is the nomenclature that prevails—with eleven assistants, such as the bird man, the "hay animal" man, the cat animal man (the attendant on all animals of the cat family, such as the tiger, leopard, etc.).



The Sacramento reviewer loved the trained stallions, calling them "a show in themselves."
This Strobridge one sheet bill dates from about 1880. Howard Tibbals Collection, The Ringling Museum.

The railroad contractor, W. K. Hayder, who contracts with railroad companies. The general contracting agent, Charles Sivals, who arranges for licenses, provisions, stores, new goods, bill boards, printing, wardrobe and harness supplies, the lot for exhibition, feed for animals, etc. The general advertising agent, Louis E. Cooke, who has under his charge a handsomely-fitted car that precedes the show. His force is engaged in posting bills. He follows Mr. Sivals and puts the bills on the boards contracted for by him and arranges all general and extensive advertising. He has sixteen assistants, such as the lithograph man, the chief bill-poster, the country bill posters, etc. These latter go out in teams and "bill" all the villages and towns within forty miles of the place of exhibition.

The excursion agent, K. C. Campbell, who arranges with railroads for excursions to points where the show exhibits, gets out the tickets, informs the people of the hours of departure and arrival, and assumes all the responsibility of such excursions. And lastly the

middle man, he who goes out between the advertising car and the show and floods the towns with "dodgers" (small bills) and keeps the public attention awake as to the great occasion—the coming of "the grandest show on earth."

Something More of the Inside

In order to give some insight into the business of the sawdust ring, the expense incurred should be known. Taking Cole's Circus and Menagerie as an example, for the very good reason that no other is at hand to be "pumped," the diligent news-gatherer gets the cut direct in his inquiry as to the capital invested, but he assumes it to be fully \$300,000, because the pay-roll is between \$2,300 and \$2,400 per week and the general expenses average \$2,000 each twenty-four hours. Railroad building has revolutionized the circus business. Few great establishments now take to "the road"—they nearly all follow the railroad lines. Thus Cole's community on wheels requires no less than 36 cars to transport it and its luggage. These are all the property of Mr. Cole, built expressly for the show business. They are of extra length and width, and equal to 43 Central Pacific flat and box cars. Four of the cars are sleepers, built

on Sunday, except in crossing the plains, where it was absolutely necessary in order to make connections, as it is found that "the day of rest" for man and beast is a sound and paying investment.

All the properties of the show, all its goods are packed, into wagons, and these are run upon the cars, thus the company is enabled to leave its own train and take to narrow-gauge roads when necessary. The cars for the horses are so fitted that every horse has a comfortable stall. It is found that the first week out the horses run down, but after that gain rapidly and flourish by life on the rail like green bay trees. The salaries of the artists of this community of show-people vary from \$20 to \$150 per week and "found." Everyone at the outset is guaranteed a thirty weeks' engagement, with a possible extension if the company make up a new season for a foreign climate, where it can be played out without interruption by the weather. All the laborers are warned against intoxication, a single slip resulting in instant and unconditional discharge; but if the man remains on the pay-roll at the end of thirty weeks he is guaranteed a bonus of \$10. Some of these laborers have traveled with Cole's establishment five or six years, and some of the actors have been with him since 1873.

The Stock and Other Matters

The stock consists of the six trick ponies, the nine performing stallions—three of which are always held in reserve—21 ring horses and 103 wagon horses. In the fall of the year Cole sends an agent to Africa and Asia to purchase animals to replace those lost by death or accident, and the manager then opens up correspondence with the various animal agencies through which those engaged in capturing wild animals deal. The elephant is the costliest animal. A good show elephant is worth from \$7,000 to \$10,000 in the show elephant market in America, according to docility, age and agility. Small elephants cost from \$3,000 to \$5,000 each. An unbroken lion costs about \$2,000. Some are found to be very ferocious and untamable, others tractable and easily broken. Tigers are of about the same value, and leopards rate at half as much. The elephant is the longest lived animal in captivity, and attains to very old age. The lion and the tiger are next among the long-lived



Another poster featuring the trained stallions, this one a Strobridge half sheet lithograph dating from probably 1881. Howard Tibbals Collection, The Ringling Museum.

expressly for the accommodation of the company, and the better sleepers are cut up into state rooms by movable partitions. The company always moves by night, that its members may have needed rest and that its tent-men may lay off during the heat of the day, as their work is done at a late hour at night and an early hour in the morning.

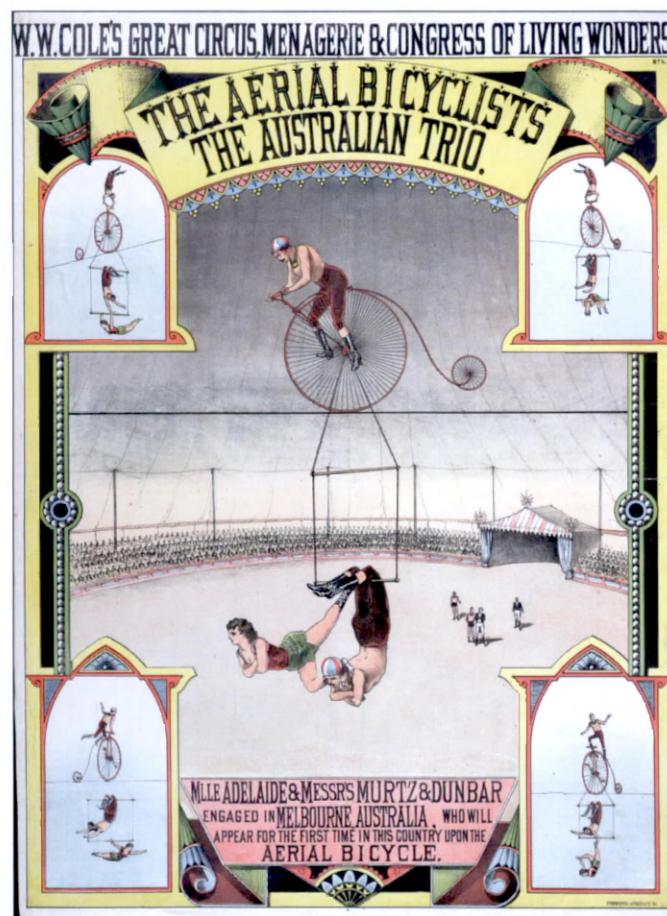
This is vastly different from the old-time system, when the company after playing by day and till late at night had to mount rough wagons and ride on long and dusty routes all night to reach the next place of exhibition, where they were allowed only a few hours for slumber snatched amidst the bustle and noise of the morning hours. Under Cole's system all sleep on the cars, except on Saturday nights and Sundays, when they all take to the hotels—the ladies, however, all have rooms at hotels or boarding houses wherever an exhibition is given. The company does not travel

beasts. The "cat animals" generally average from fifteen to seventeen years as their lease of life. The manager furnishes the general wardrobe but the actors furnish their own fleshings, linen, costume, etc. The laundry business of the company is something that tries the souls of washerwomen and laundry proprietors whenever the show arrives in a town. The first movement of the actor is to send off his or her washing with orders to have it completed within twelve or fifteen hours. But as this is not always possible each performer keeps on hand a very large supply of clean linen, fleshings, etc., and can if hard pushed stand the pressure for a week or more.

Omitted Details

It was intended to have spoken somewhat at length of the circus artist and his life and habits, but space forbids. Merest reference can only be had to the fact that they bitterly protest against the popular

belief that there is less virtue among them than other men and women; they claim to be a family in happy accord—respecting and respected—living a roving life largely, but one conducive to health and, as statistics show, to longevity. Upon these matters copious notes taken must be passed over now. In conclusion, it is but fair, having gone thus far into the business affairs of Mr. Cole and his great show, to say that he has a little world on wheels, a quiet, orderly company—one of the best in appearance that has ever been on the coast. He has a large and varied assortment of animals to this clime unknown. He has a magnificent stud of horses, a gorgeous array of fine wagons, chariots and cars; a force of employees, disciplined like a regiment of well-tried soldiers; some fifty or sixty actors and assistants, who are all good, and some of whom have no superiors. His programmes are not lengthy, but are worked off with promptness that is highly commendable. His entertainment is chaste, novel, often startling, good in every feature, and without blemish worthy of criticism. In the printing line he must have spent a small fortune, for no such elegant "paper" has ever been put on billboards in California. His promises therein, though framed in adjectival wealth of words that

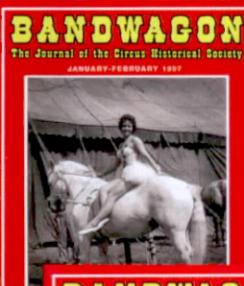


The aerial bicycle act, depicted in this Strobridge one sheet poster, was one of the features of the 1880 W. W. Cole performance. Howard Tibbals Collection, The Ringling Museum.

brazen-cheeked representative to personate him, to "standoff" the beggars—all this and much more must remain an untold tale. BW

take the breath away, are faithfully kept, and all that is advertised to be presented is given.

The countless readers of the *Record-Union*, who will be found wherever the enterprising Cole may take "the greatest show on earth," will now know more of his exhibition than ever before, and still not know it all, for many an interesting detail obtained has been omitted—all about the winter quarters, where the "artists" train, the time of life at which they begin, how the manager prospects a country before he starts out for a season, how he knows just the condition of the crops and the prosperity of the people; how he gathers his company and disciplines them; how the horses are selected and broken; how the trainer judges of the proper horse for the ring; how the smart horses are rejected and the green horses accepted; how the "route" for a season is laid out; how the agents advance in skirmish line; how the main army moves on; the trials of the manager with railroad magnates and superintendents; how his life is worried out of him by dead-heads: how he has a



For a limited time only the Circus Historical Society is offering all six 1997 Bandwagons as a group for \$25.00, about half the listed price.

In 1997 *Bandwagon* published articles on the Golden Age of Chivalry wagon, Bob Thornton, Buffalo Bill and the 1893 World's Fair, Dan Rice, circus cook houses, the Christy Bros. Circus, the Frediani riding family, the circus in Kansas, the 1873 Barnum Circus, Jess Adkins, sea lion training, James M. Nixon, and high seating.

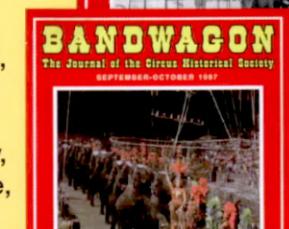
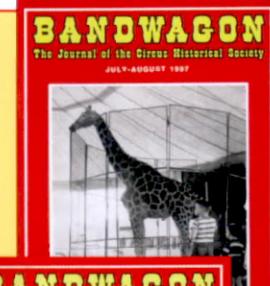
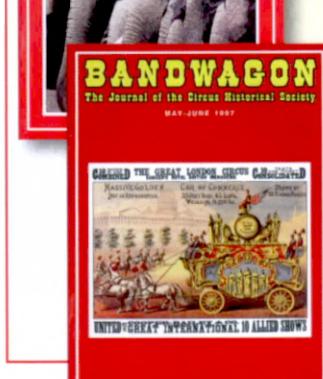
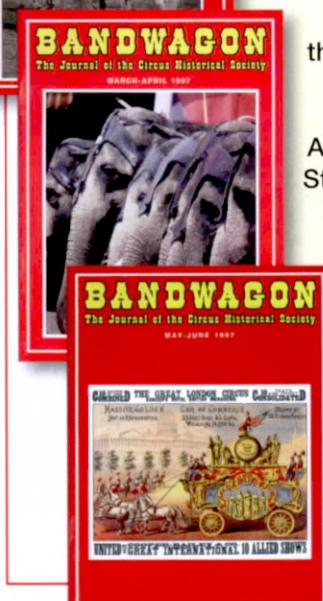
Al Stencell, Fred Pfening, Jr., John Staley, Fred Dahlinger, Joe Bradbury, Stuart Thayer, William Slout, Orrin King, Bill Johnston, Sarah Blackstone, and David Carlyon were among the authors.

A complete listing of 1997 articles and authors can be found in the *Bandwagon* index on the CHS website at circushistory.org.

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P. T. Barnum, Jumbo the Elephant, and the Barnum Museum of Natural History at Tufts University

by Andrew McClellan

In 1883, the great showman P. T. Barnum agreed to build an eponymous museum of natural history on the campus of Tufts University, which he had served as a founding trustee. After a long career managing museums and circuses, Barnum hoped to secure a positive legacy through the creation of an unambiguously serious institution. In addition to building and collections funds, Barnum supplied the Tufts museum—as well as the Smithsonian and American Museum of Natural History in New York with exotic and valuable dead animals from his circus. Barnum brought his influence to bear on the latter two in order to develop his museum at Tufts. His greatest prize was Jumbo the elephant, whose skin and bones were involved in a contentious tug-of-war among the three museums following his death in a train accident in 1885.

When Phineas Taylor Barnum died in 1891, he was among the best-known men in America, if not the world. During the middle years of the nineteenth century, he achieved fame and notoriety as the proprietor of more than one incarnation of his American Museum in New York City, and in later decades he was widely known as the chief impresario of The Greatest Show on Earth, a massive, spectacular travelling circus and menagerie. A tireless self-promoter and media hound, he helped give shape to modern notions of celebrity and mass entertainment. Along the way, he made household names of Tom Thumb, the Feejee Mermaid, Jenny Lind, and Jumbo the elephant, among others. Much less familiar, then and now, are Barnum's efforts to build another museum devoted to natural history on the campus of Tufts University in the suburbs of Boston. Founded in 1883 during the heyday of American natural history museums and dismantled sixty years later, the Barnum Museum at Tufts once boasted an outstanding collection of zoological specimens, led by Barnum's stuffed pachyderm, Jumbo.¹ The history of the formation of this little-known institution contributes to our knowledge of the development of natural history museums in America, including the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C., and the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH) in New York, and it also sheds light on the serious aspirations

and philanthropic impulses of the great showman. If Barnum is remembered today principally as a huckster and entrepreneur who believed that the “people like to be humbugged,” we should remember he was also a self-educated advocate of temperance who preached the Victorian virtues of self-improvement, education, and innocent recreation, and the two sides of his personality were reconciled above all in his creation of and support for circuses and museums.² Coming toward the end of his long public career, the Barnum Museum at Tufts represented the culmination of an abiding desire to converge the pursuits of edification and entertainment.

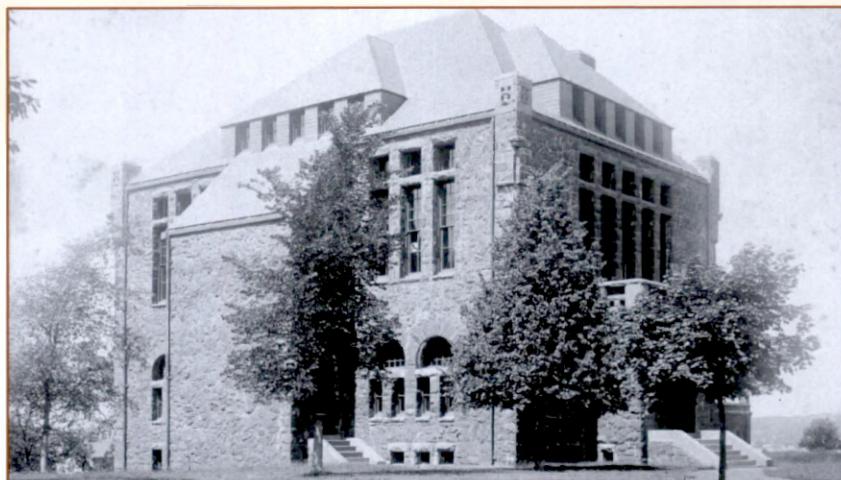
The Barnum Museum at Tufts

Barnum's museum was conceived as part of a campaign to expand the Tufts campus during the transformational presidency of the Revered Elmer Hewitt Capen (1875-1905). When Tufts was founded in 1852 all functions, from library and lecture room to student dormitory and faculty offices, were concentrated in a single building on a hill offering a vista of downtown Boston.

The gradual addition of new residence halls around a fledgling quadrangle allowed for growth in the student body, but core facilities were still lacking. Acknowledging an increasingly competitive educational environment, Capen told his trustees: “We must be progressive and aggressive if we expect Tufts College to

maintain the rank it has gained among New England institutions.”³ In his inaugural address in 1875, he identified a separate library, gymnasium, chapel, and science building as top priorities and he set out to find willing benefactors. In 1881 Capen initiated a drive to raise \$150,000 for new buildings. Mary Goddard, the widow of a trustee, gave money for a new chapel and gymnasium. In hope of funding a new science building, Capen reached out to P. T. Barnum.

Barnum was an obvious target for Capen's capital campaign. A life-long supporter of the Unitarian Universalist faith with which Tufts was affiliated, Barnum had agreed to be one of the college's founding trustees. Though his booming career prevented him from attending trustee meetings and compelled him to resign from the board after five years of service, he continued to follow Tufts's progress with interest. In the meantime he had also prospered and become known for charitable giving—almost too well known. When Capen first approached Barnum for a donation of \$30,000 for a museum housing scientific facilities, Barnum was reluctant in good part because he feared it would unleash further solicitations and incite “hard feelings among heirs and poor relations.”⁴ By May of 1883 Capen had persuaded Barnum to give the money but on two conditions: first, the gift must be kept secret, even from his wife, preferably until after his death; second, once his identity as donor was disclosed the building should “be forever called the Barnum Museum of Natural History.”⁵ It was only a matter of days, however, before the urge for self-display got the better of discretion.



The Barnum Museum of Natural History, Tufts University, Medford, Massachusetts, built in 1884. Photo dates from a few years later. Barnum Collection, Digital Collections and Archives, Tufts University.

Barnum was soon suggesting that a self-portrait should ornament the entrance and that his name should go over the door. "You see the passion for display is 'strong in death,'" he wrote.⁶ Once he had committed to the idea of an eponymous museum, he was keen to see it built as soon as possible—"the quicker you get at it and the faster you drive it, the better I shall like it. *Life is short.*"⁷ He feared the revelation of his gift would "open the flood-gate of begging letters from all parts of the earth but I must stand that."⁸

The Barnum Museum combined Capen's need for a science building and Barnum's life-long interest in uplifting public spectacles and self-promotion. Fuelled by global exploration, positivist values, and an ideology of progress, Victorian science was dedicated to the study and classification of specimens, which



Gallery, Barnum Museum of Natural History, c. 1930. Rollins Collection, Digital Collections and Archives, Tufts University.

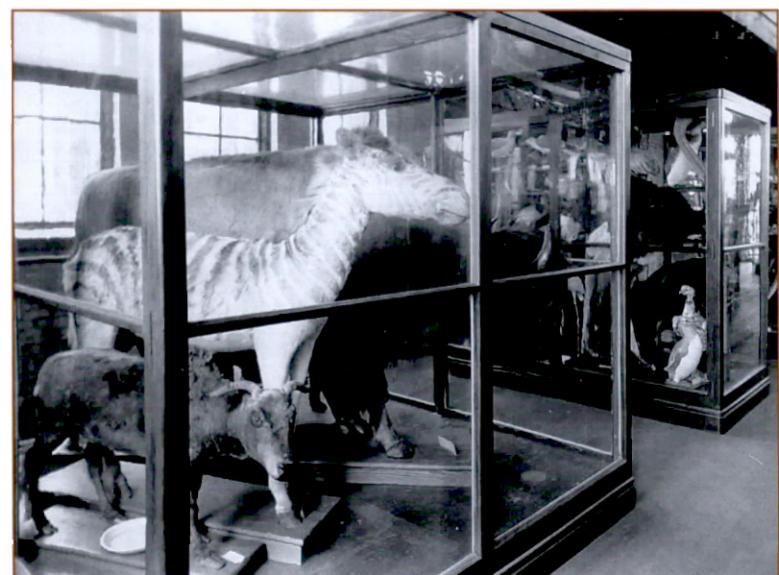
museums both demonstrated and enabled. Natural history had also become popular with the middle-class public, giving rise to respectable new hobbies such as mineral and insect collecting, bird watching, and amateur palaeontology.⁹ Barnum capitalized on this growing interest in his New York museums (both destroyed by fire) and later in his circus and menagerie, whose educational value he trumpeted. "The menagerie of wild beasts, birds and reptiles—comprising every curious specimen of animal life from the denizens of the torrid African jungle to those of the Polar region—forms a study that will impart more valuable information in two hours than can be obtained from reading books on zoology in a year."¹⁰ He was an early supporter of, and contributor to, both the Smithsonian Institution in Washington (founded 1846; National Museum opened 1881; National Zoo, 1889) and the AMNH in New York (founded 1869). Both thanked him publicly for his generous donations of animal specimens from his menageries.¹¹ Perhaps in return for Barnum's generosity, the Smithsonian's secretary, Joseph Henry, recognized his American Museum "as a *public institution*, entitled to receive . . . casts of everything that other public institutions received from the Smithsonian."¹² The respectability Barnum sought, but never received, from his early establishments would surely come with the creation of a university museum devoted to high learning and serious science.

Construction of the museum proceeded quickly once Barnum's gift was in hand. By June of 1884, just a year after Barnum and

Capen had agreed to terms, the building was ready for a dedicatory inscription. Capen proposed Latin, to which Barnum responded, mindful perhaps of broader public interest, "I have no objection to Latin but somehow for we chaps who don't understand Latin there ought to be in plain English an inscription inside or out, permanent, Barnum Museum of Natural History."¹³ It seems brevity was the compromise as "Barnum fecit AD MDCCCLXXXIII" was carved into the stone lintel above the entrance. Ill health prevented Barnum from attending commencement ceremonies at Tufts in June to inaugurate his building in person, but he sent comments to be read, expressing hope that the museum would prove "another factor in the work of the College, helping it on its high career of usefulness."¹⁴

Designed by the architect John Philipp Rinn (1837-1905) of the Boston firm Andrews, Jones, Biscoe & Whitmore, the Barnum Museum rose two stories above a basement level fitted with a laboratory and lecture room. The ground floor included a library and vestibule, complete with Thomas Ball's marble bust of Barnum. The upper floor featured a well-lighted mezzanined grand hall, 34' high and 70' long by 50' wide, intended for the display of natural history specimens, mostly displayed in wood and glass cabinets. On the eve of its completion the university magazine asserted: "It will be equaled by few museums in the country either in point of size or elegance."¹⁵ Together with the new chapel, also designed by Rinn and built of local blue stone, the new museum flanked the original college building and gave the campus an increased sense of coherence and completeness.

Once the building was ready for occupation, it took several months to install the varied collection. As early as the 1850s, John P. Marshall (1832-1901), Tufts's first professor of geology



Specimen cases, Barnum Museum of Natural History, c. 1920. Historical Materials Collection, Digital Collections and Archives, Tufts University.

and chemistry, had begun collecting and soliciting donations of specimens, mostly geological, for use in classes. A purchase fund established by Mary Goddard allowed Marshall to shop for minerals and fossils from dealers and collectors in Europe and closer to home. Gifts of random ethnological material, coins, curiosities, and stuffed birds rounded out the eclectic collection. Marshall's ambition for the new museum, encouraged by Barnum, was to amass a comprehensive display of natural history. In keeping

with pre-Darwinian notions of science, an orderly arrangement of animals and plants would yield knowledge of and mastery over the natural world. It would also reveal, as Barnum himself put it, “the infinite wisdom and power of the Creator.”¹⁶ In other words, nineteenth-century museums of natural history had both a scientific and a theological purpose ideally suited to the moral and intellectual formation of young men and women.

Barnum provided funds for the museum building; he also helped build its collections. For years he had supplied dead animals from his menagerie to museums in Washington and New York. Henceforth he would do the same for his museum at Tufts. He also promised that Tufts would one day get his prize beast, Jumbo the elephant.¹⁷ Because the Tufts museum had no means of preparing dead animals for exhibition, Barnum put Marshall in touch with Henry Augustus Ward, proprietor of Ward’s

Natural History Establishment of Rochester, New York. Educated at Harvard, where he briefly served as an assistant to the great scientist Louis Agassiz, Ward (1834-1906) became a leading taxidermist and naturalist in his own right.¹⁸ Ward travelled widely, building his knowledge of the natural world and collecting specimens for sale. His travels took him to Africa, Central America, the West Indies, Russia, and through Europe to the Middle East. He also journeyed to the American West, where he dabbled in gold mining and befriended William F. Cody, Buffalo Bill, reminding us that the business of “show” in the nineteenth century encompassed both legitimate museum displays and Wild West extravaganzas.

Ward was among the first to recognize and foster a growing appetite for natural history collections on American university campuses and in civic museums. One of Ward’s important disciples, William T. Hornaday (1854-1937), said of him that he had done “more to inspire, to build up, and to fill up American museums than any other ten men of his time or since his time. But for him, our American museums would never have forged ahead as they did from 1870 to 1890.”¹⁹ By his own account he assembled natural history collections for over 200 American institutions, including numerous colleges and universities, among them Vassar, Northwestern, Yale, Grinnell, Lehigh, Elmira, Earlham, Cornell, and Tufts. He also worked regularly for the AMNH and the Smithsonian, to both of which he sent specimens and trained taxidermists, notably Hornaday and Carl Akeley (1864-1929), who each went on to enjoy important careers in museums. In addition to his own trips in search of stock, he became a U.S. agent for European suppliers, including Deyrolle in Paris and the Blaschka brothers in Germany, famous for their glass models of plants and marine invertebrates. Another important source of specimens for

Ward were the circuses and menageries that toured the United States—none bigger than Barnum’s. Through taxidermy, deceased animals from travelling menageries enjoyed an afterlife as mounted museum exhibits. Soon enough museums would employ their own taxidermists and mount their own collecting expeditions, but for many years in the late nineteenth century Ward operated as an essential middleman.

In November 1883 Ward paid Tufts a visit with a commitment from Barnum to provide \$5,000 to start a collection under his guidance.²⁰ As he did for other small and understaffed colleges, Ward worked closely with Marshall to plan the formation of a “Zoological Cabinet”—in this case, one that would be “more scientifically (systematically) complete than is any other collection except that of Agassiz [at Harvard] East of the Hudson.”²¹ He assured Marshall that the collection would both fulfill “the demands of systematic science” and “comprehend forms which make a fine display.”²² Aiming to provide comprehensive service, Ward further offered to design the wall-cabinets and to provide text labels for the exhibits. Relying on unimpeded visual access to specimens and the accurate ordering of species and genera in relation to each other, natural history museums were only as good as their displays and labeling.

Following Ward’s visit to Tufts, Marshall returned with Ward to Rochester where the two men drew up an eighteen-page catalogue that gave precedence to “Beasts, Birds, Reptiles and Fishes.”²³ In addition to an initial delivery of some 250 mounted animals and 150 shells and coral pieces from Ward’s stock, a three way arrangement with Barnum,

Ward, and Tufts secured a future supply of new specimens. When animals from The Greatest Show on Earth died, the carcasses would be sent to Ward who would then prepare and offer them to Tufts. If Tufts wanted them, the price of mounting and delivery would be taken from Barnum’s acquisition fund. If Tufts declined a given specimen but Ward wanted it for his own stock, he would give Tufts credit towards future work. For example, in 1886 when he received a camel from Barnum, he wanted \$75 to prepare it or offered Tufts a \$10 credit; for a small red kangaroo, he asked \$25 or offered a further \$10 credit. If neither Tufts nor Ward had need of a given animal, no credit would be offered; Ward informed Marshall that should he receive, say, a peccary from Barnum he could offer Tufts nothing because he already had thirty-three of the stuffed pig-like creatures waiting to be sold!²⁴ Barnum evidently believed Ward was the best in the business but he was wary of being overcharged. He cautioned Marshall that Ward could become “too greedy” yet was also confident he could be “bargained down to low prices by shrewd Yankees.”²⁵ Perhaps in part to keep Ward honest, Barnum



Jumbo was the ride elephant at the London Zoo, c. 1880. Archives, Tufts University.

sent occasional work for Tufts to a second taxidermist, John Wallace of New York.

The arrangement between Ward and Tufts was not always straightforward. Though Barnum had been giving dead animals to museums since the early 1870s, he needed to renegotiate this agreement with his various business partners over the years. In July of 1883, Barnum got his partners to consent once more to donate the museum animals from the menagerie after they died. As he confided to Elmer Capen, his partners "cared more for dollars than for science or for the museum and it is only because they don't happen to see dollars in our dead animals that they don't as yet interfere with my giving them for the benefit of the museum."²⁶ Three years later, however, his partners had come to see the dollars at stake in their menagerie assets. As Barnum explained to Capen, a recent partner and experienced menagerie man, James Cooper, was proving more "illiberal than my other two partners, [James L.] Hutchinson & [W. W.] Cole—and as Cooper has charge of the animal department, he takes pride in cutting me off from obtaining our dead animals free. When I get my three partners together in March next, I shall endeavor to remedy this, especially so far as small animals are concerned. I own but 3/8ths of the entire show, and not being personally with it I can't do so much in this way. But I shall do my best."²⁷

If peccaries and other small animals had little value on the open market, extraordinary creatures could command a handsome price. Ward estimated that the carcass of large male lion with a heavy mane could fetch \$75-\$100, while a rare double-horned rhino was worth \$1,500. In

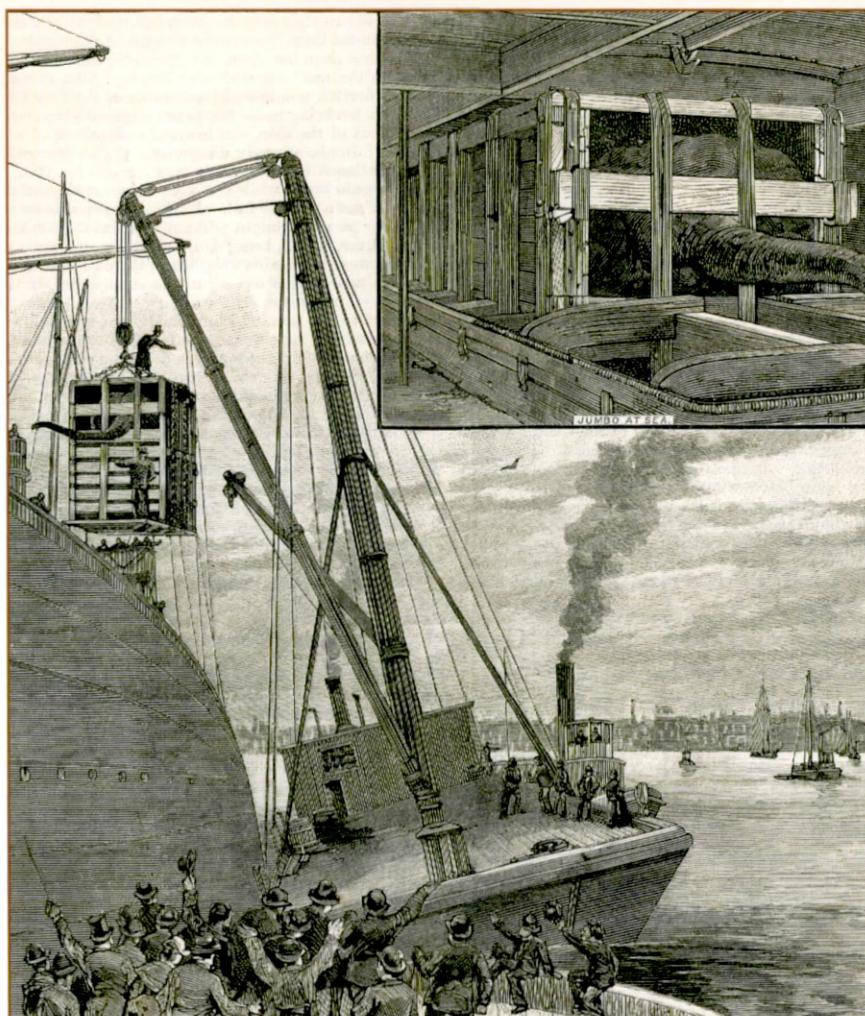
both cases, Barnum contented his partners and had them mounted for Tufts.²⁸ Among the animals that came to the Barnum Museum via Ward in the 1880s and early 1890s, besides the large lion and double-horned rhino, were other species of carnivorous cats and monkeys; camels, llamas, and bears; tapirs and anteaters; elks, antelopes, hyenas, and hartebeest; a kangaroo, giraffe, peccary, coati, cassowary, porcupine, and ostrich.²⁹

Marshall was grateful for what Barnum provided, but at the same time he wanted to remind the world "the primary intention of our museum is the instruction of our students rather than the

amusement of the sight-seeing public."³⁰ Barnum's menagerie by design had more in common with a curiosity cabinet than a modern teaching collection. Ward called the Barnum Museum's "series of rarer exotic animals the finest in America," but a teaching museum needed more than exotica.³¹ Marshall was happy to give Barnum's "pets . . . a kind of immortality in the museum he has so generously created for us," yet he hoped to balance donations of rare creatures with acquisitions more relevant to routine pedagogy—everyday flora and fauna that no curiosity seeker would pay to see. At times Marshall also wrestled with the showman's natural tendency to favor visual effect over utility: "Evidently Mr. Barnum prizes mounted skins above mounted skeletons. I want more skeletons."³²

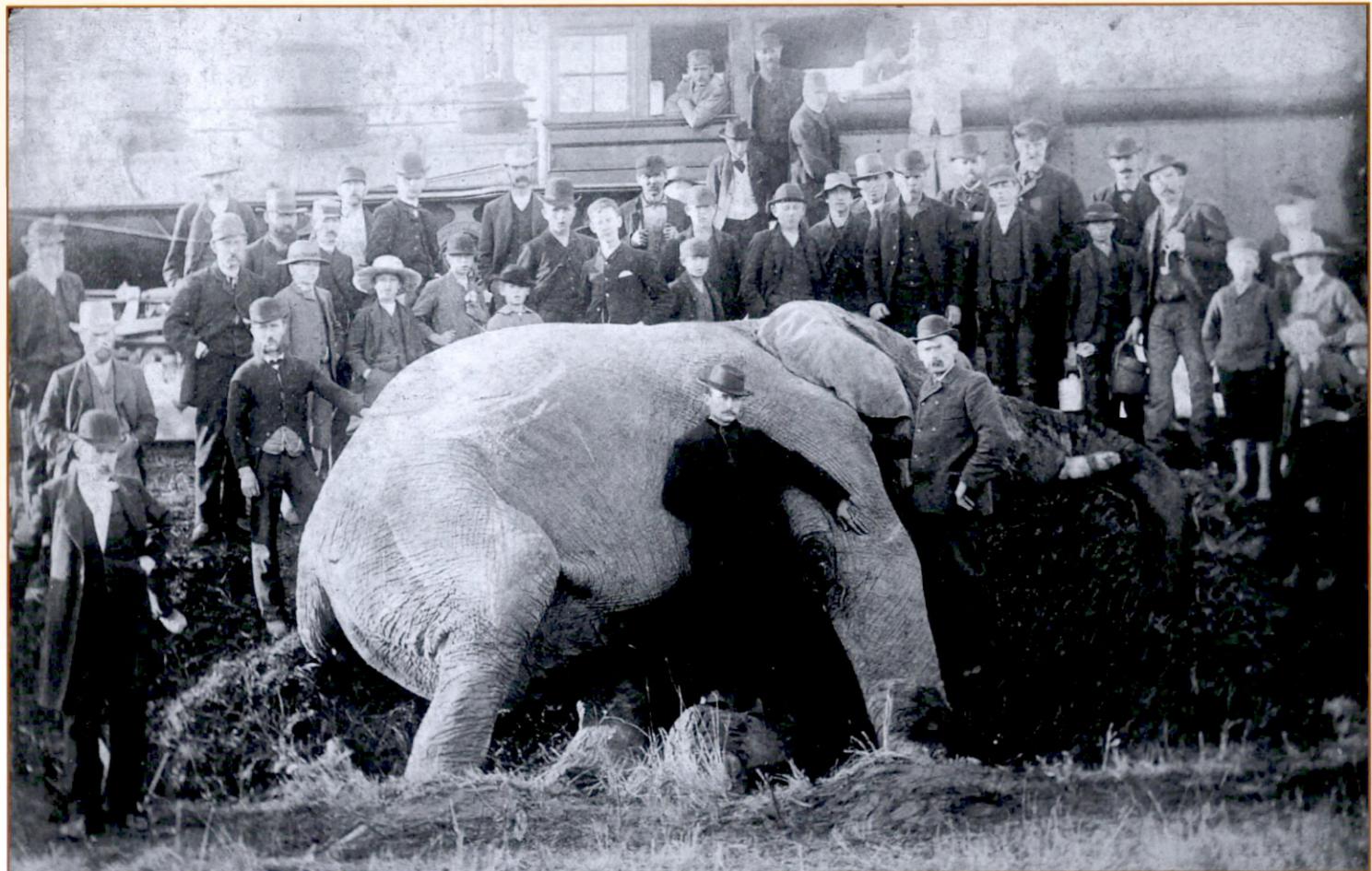
To meet the Museum's need for more prosaic but pedagogically useful specimens, Barnum brokered another triangular deal,

this one involving his menagerie, Tufts, and the Smithsonian in Washington. As mentioned above, Barnum had had an arrangement to supply the Smithsonian with dead animals from the early 1870s. Following the creation of the Tufts museum, he asked for something in return for his gifts. In March of 1884, Barnum informed Elmer Capen that he would soon be seeing the Smithsonian's secretary, Spencer F. Baird (1823-1887), and "expect to get him to present duplicates to your Museum as some off set to the many dead animals which I present to his institution."³³ Baird soon confirmed in writing that he would be happy to provide specimens "in return for the many favors you have rendered the Smithsonian."³⁴ A year passed without further exchange of letters—or specimens. Alarmed by the diminished flow



Jumbo being loaded onto the Assyrian Monarch. From "How Jumbo crossed the Ocean," Harper's Young People, April 25, 1882.

of animals to Washington, Baird wrote an imploring letter to Barnum: "May I not put in another plea for the National Museum in connection with the animals that die in your great Menagerie? We have enjoyed your favor in this respect for so many years that the cessation has been a source of serious concern."³⁵ Barnum assured Baird he had no intention of cutting off the Smithsonian, and reiterated his plan to donate Jumbo, but he also made clear his desire to help "my little pet museum at Tufts."³⁶ At the same time, Barnum wrote to Tufts, underscoring the leverage he had over the Smithsonian, and urged Marshall to go in person to Washington to



This photo was taken the morning after Jumbo was killed in St. Thomas, Ontario, Canada, on September 15, 1885. James L. Hutchinson, show manager, has his hand on Jumbo's front leg while

select objects for the Barnum Museum.³⁷

Marshall duly sent a list of desiderata—including plants of the western United States, fossils and minerals, invertebrates, and archaeological materials—and followed with a visit to Baird in the autumn of 1885. As Marshall later recalled, the audience with Baird did not go well: “I did not feel very enthusiastic over the results of my visit. While Prof. Baird was apparently cordial, he did not offer to give me any information in regard to what the Smithsonian or National Museum had for exchange. It seemed that they had found out at Washington the best way how not to do it. A remark made by Prof. Baird showed how little he appreciated your effort to found the Barnum Museum. ‘What need is there,’ he said, ‘of another Museum near Harvard College?’ He could not understand that such a Museum would enlist the sympathies and efforts of a large class in our country, besides being a most useful factor in a College education, that every college must have its Nat. History collections on its own ground and not two or three miles distant.”³⁸

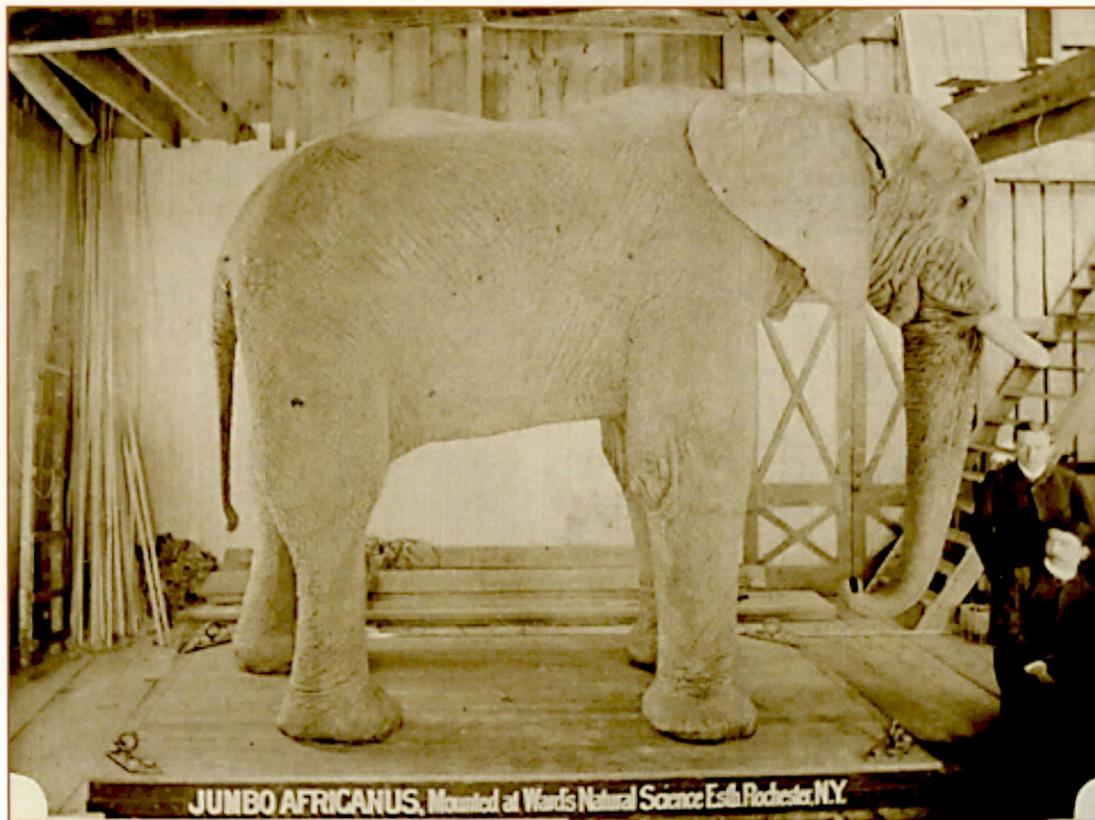
Barnum was disappointed by the Smithsonian’s “meanness” and decided that since “Prof. Baird cannot or will not carry out his promises,” he would henceforth send all dead animals from the menagerie to Ward in Rochester for the Tufts museum. Beyond the snub, Barnum had no time to play go-between: “I want this matter simplified so that I need not hereafter be often bothered with details of skins and bones.”³⁹ In hope of settling matters, he asked Marshall to send him a list of specimens, which he would then forward to Baird with another clear reminder of what the Smithsonian stood to

Matthew Scott, the elephant's keeper, stands in front of pachyderm's head. Most of the others in the picture appear to be locals, many of them children who doubtless never forgot that day. Pfening Archives.

lose should his wishes not be met.⁴⁰

Evidently the favorable results Barnum anticipated were not forthcoming. In the summer of 1886 Tufts received a shipment from Washington, but it was much smaller than expected—“the small collection rec'd from them did not occupy one twelfth the space that I reserved for them,” Marshall reported, and moreover included unnecessary duplicates.⁴¹ Marshall allowed there might have been a misunderstanding, that the Smithsonian curators could have confused the Tufts order with that of another college, since “Country academies get collections similar to the one sent us, by making application through the representatives in Congress from their districts.”⁴² But the problem was not easily resolved. Over the next two years correspondence back and forth reveals further misunderstandings, delays, and growing irritation on all sides.

Eventually brought to task by Barnum, William Hornaday at the Smithsonian pleaded ignorance, apologized for the confusion, and set about satisfying Tufts’s requests. In May 1888 he informed the impatient showman that he had just dispatched a “first class” set of mineral duplicates and stone implements, “the best collection the museum has ever sent out,” and that a second shipment of invertebrates would soon follow, complementing the one sent two years earlier, which included specimens “such as are never furnished to institutions applying through members of Congress.”⁴³ Unfortunately, this new consignment also proved somewhat disappointing. Marshall wrote to Hornaday’s superior at the Smithsonian, George Brown Goode (1851-1896), that the minerals



JUMBO AFRICANUS, Mounted at Ward's Natural Science Estab. Rochester, N.Y.

and artifacts were mostly “duplicates of what we already have,” though they would prove “useful for purposes of instruction.”⁴⁴ Marshall’s tepid response infuriated Hornaday. He wrote to Goode: “Mr. Marshall is offensively critical and without any cause whatsoever. Evidently nothing less than the universe will satisfy him. He deserves to be brought up this time with a round turn, and put on the defensive from this time on.”⁴⁵ Choosing a more diplomatic course, Goode reached out to Barnum. In the spring of 1889 further requests from, and shipments to, Tufts followed, but these elicited yet more mild complaints about the quality and preparation of samples, which brought Hornaday to a boil.⁴⁶ Bypassing Goode, he wrote intemperately to Barnum: “I must say I am very sorry that Professor Marshall is so ill pleased, indeed, I might even say disgusted, for that is what his tone clearly implies, with what we have sent to your Museum. Seriously, Mr. Barnum, I do not think we can ever please him with anything, and hereafter it will be a matter of indifference whether he is pleased or not with what we send.”⁴⁷ Barnum sent the letter to Marshall with a personal note: “Take this coolly. Don’t refer to it. Whom the Gods wish to destroy they

Jumbo's skeleton at Ward's Natural Science Establishment, Rochester, New York, 1886. Courtesy of the Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, University of Rochester Libraries.

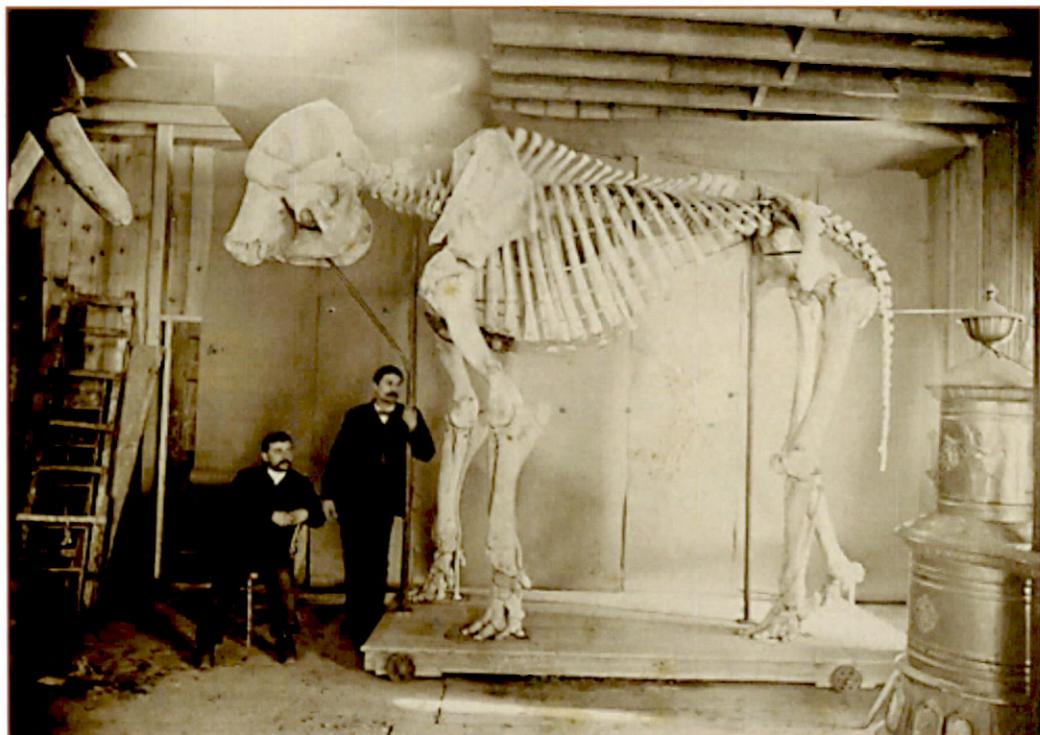
Jumbo's hide at Ward's Natural Science Establishment, Rochester, New York, 1886. Courtesy of the Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, University of Rochester Libraries.

first make mad. Guess Hornaday will help us yet.”

Sure enough, once mollified by Barnum and perhaps reined in by Goode, Hornaday was once more encouraged to cooperate. In March 1890, a significant consignment was sent to Tufts, which included large and small casts of fish species, an ancient Assyrian inscription, Native and Central American artifacts, a meteorite, and 118 marine invertebrates collected by the new marine research vessel USS *Albatross*, together with “the exact name, locality and depth of each specimen given.” Hornaday wanted it understood, “This is the best collection of

invertebrates ever sent out from here, and it would cost at least \$500 to duplicate it.”⁴⁸ This time the delivery was as good as promised and Barnum happily reported to Hornaday that he had received from Marshall “a glowing description of the specimens which you have sent to the Barnum Museum. I thank you and Prof. Goode and the Smithsonian and National Museum for these contributions.”⁴⁹

Barnum and Marshall were at last satisfied, yet Barnum’s relationship with the Smithsonian had been irrevocably damaged. A year before his death, he told Hornaday: “I confess that I have felt



that the National Museum did not contribute as much as she easily could, and ought, toward the Tufts Museum.⁵⁰ The Smithsonian would not be the last museum to feel the sting of an unrequited donor who holds out on a precious gift. For many years, Barnum felt a patriotic obligation to help the Smithsonian, supplying animals, and taking part in early plans to create a national zoo. It was long his intention to give the National Museum his prize elephant, Jumbo, the most famous animal in the world. In the late nineteenth century, Jumbo was equal, if not superior, to the Mona Lisa in terms of public interest, and correspondence with Barnum never failed to mention Washington's desire to acquire the celebrated beast. In the end, the Smithsonian's inadequate courtship of a mighty patron cost it a unique gift.

Jumbo the Elephant

The story of Jumbo has been often told and needs only brief summary here.⁵¹ Captured as a young elephant in Abyssinia (now Ethiopia) in 1861, he was acquired by the Jardin des Plantes in Paris before being sent to England in 1865 in an exchange with the Zoological Society of London. In the years following, Jumbo grew to be the largest elephant in captivity and became the crowd favorite of the London Zoo. For children—including those of Queen Victoria and the young Churchill—no visit to the Zoo was complete without a ride on his back. But not long before he was sold to Barnum in 1882, Jumbo had begun to show signs of aggressive and potentially dangerous behavior, symptoms of what is known in elephant circles as "musth." Fearing a public catastrophe, zoo authorities accepted Barnum's handsome offer to purchase the elephant for \$10,000. The sale triggered huge public outcry and controversy in Britain, which Barnum, ever the master of public relations, turned to great advantage. The story of Jumbo's exodus from London and arrival in New York was serialized in the press and much hyped by the showman. By the time Jumbo joined The Greatest Show on Earth, he was already a household name on both sides of the Atlantic.

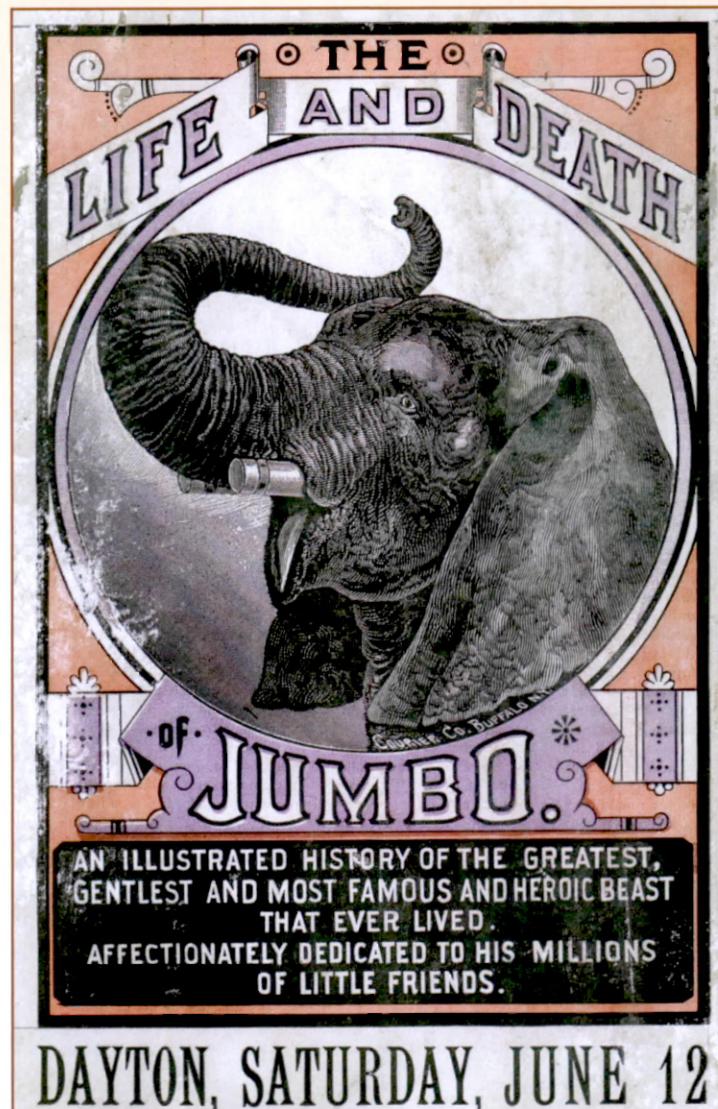
By virtue of his unrivaled size and celebrity, Jumbo remained the star attraction of the circus until his accidental death in a collision with a train in St Thomas, Ontario, on September 15, 1885. No stranger to a business setback or loss of animal life in his menagerie, Barnum made plans to ensure Jumbo's posthumous fame almost as

soon as he came to America. Though Jumbo was a healthy twenty-one-year-old elephant when he crossed the Atlantic in 1882, the stresses of captivity, constant rail travel and performance in an alien climate, not to mention the rudimentary state of veterinary medicine, made the longevity of circus animals unpredictable. After his second year on tour, in the autumn of 1883, Jumbo came down with a mysterious ailment that caused him to lose energy and weight. With his prognosis uncertain, Barnum contracted with Ward to give immediate priority to mounting his remains if and when he should perish. "I shall have my managers understand that if we lose Jumbo (which Heaven forbid!) you must be telegraphed to immediately, and hope you will lose no time in saving his skin & skeleton."⁵² Barnum shrewdly anticipated that even in death Jumbo could be a valuable attraction in his travelling show.

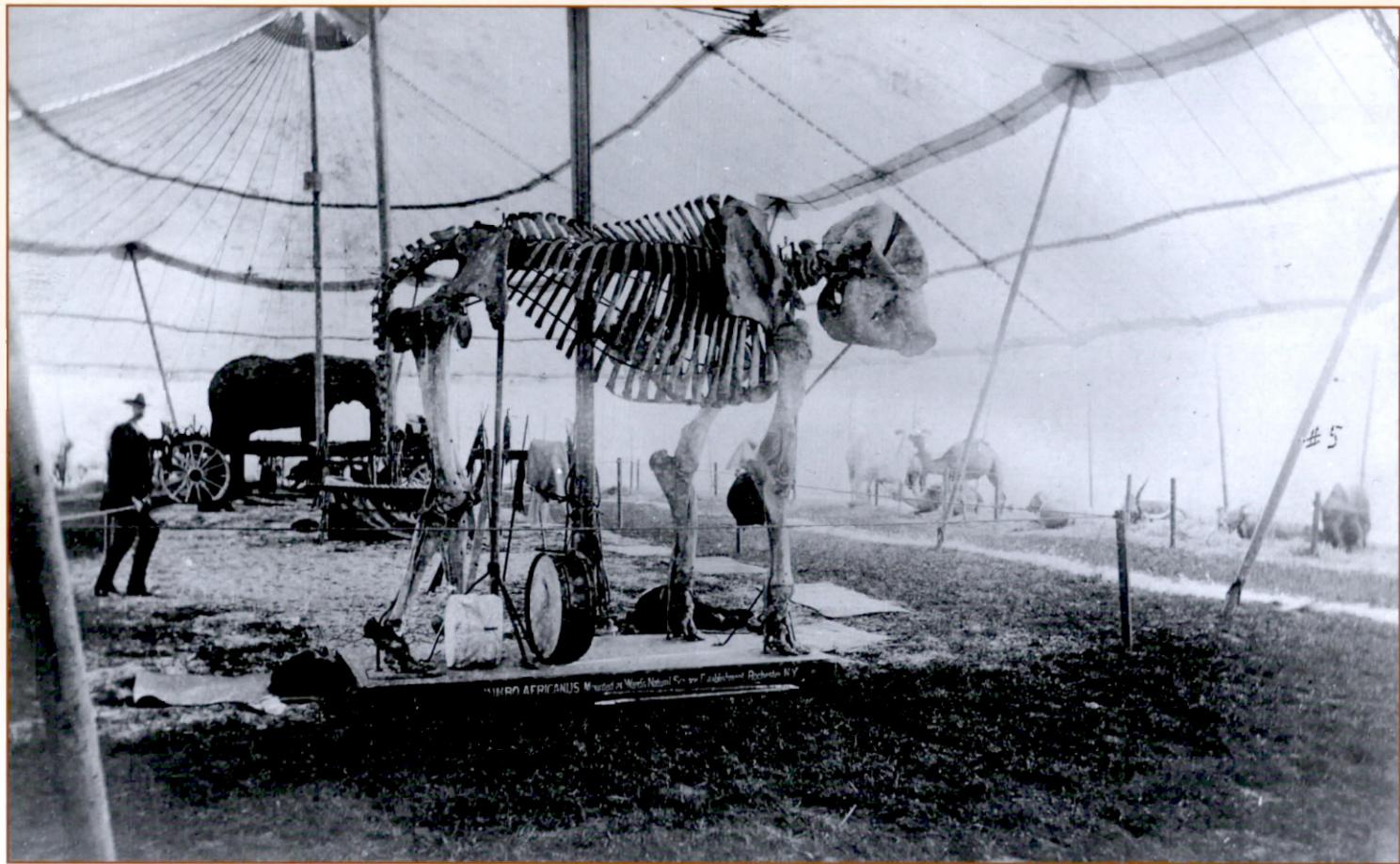
And so Ward was ready when news came of Jumbo's accident in Canada. In fact, he may have been especially well prepared since just two weeks before his death the circus had passed through Rochester and Jumbo's keeper, Matthew Scott, had confided in Henry Ward's cousin, Frank, that "he does not think that he will live long, that it is now nearly a year since he has been able to lie down."⁵³ In any event, two days after Jumbo's death, Barnum wired Ward: "Go ahead, save skin and skeleton... . Have not doubt you will finish both for exhibition."⁵⁴ With the 1885 season coming to an end, it was decided that Jumbo's mounted hide and skeleton would both accompany the circus when it set out on tour the following spring.

Ward worked furiously through the winter, aided by a young Carl Akeley, who went on to a successful career at the Field Museum in Chicago and at the AMNH, where he designed the great room of African mammals that now bears his name.

Following advice from Spencer Baird, Barnum wrote to Ward encouraging him to increase Jumbo's height during stuffing. "It will be a grand thing to take all advantage possible in this direction," wrote Barnum. "Let him show like a mountain!"⁵⁵ The purpose of taxidermy was to perpetuate in death the appearance of life; typically, it involved representing a given specimen in the best possible condition, free of blemish (including unsightly bullet holes) and in the prime of life.⁵⁶ While Jumbo was alive, Barnum had always prevaricated on the subject of his actual size, allowing imagination and rumor to inflate estimates.⁵⁷



Even in death Jumbo rated his own pamphlet published by Barnum and London in 1886. It contained a biography of the great elephant along with an account by Henry Ward about preparing the dead Jumbo for exhibition. Pfening Archives.



This iconic image of the Barnum and Bailey museum tent shows Jumbo's skin and skeleton during their last tour in America in 1888. His hide was given to Tufts in the spring of 1889, where it remained, except for Jumbo's curtain call in London later that year, until being destroyed by fire in 1975. Circus World Museum Collection.

Once dead and stuffed, a definitive reckoning was unavoidable, so Barnum leapt at the chance to enhance his dimensions for posterity. Jumbo's mounted hide and skeleton were finished by late February 1886 and Barnum orchestrated a media event in Rochester, hoping to prime public curiosity for the upcoming season. By all accounts, Jumbo was as popular dead as alive and he travelled with the circus through Barnum's triumphant return to London in the winter of 1889-1890. Even as Barnum calculated Jumbo's posthumous worth in the years leading up to the fatal train collision, he expected public interest eventually to wane and all the while gave thought to a permanent home for his great elephant beyond the circus. As early as July 1883, a year after Jumbo's acquisition and only two months after committing to build the Barnum Museum, he got his partners to agree to give Jumbo to Tufts once he died.⁵⁸ Whether Tufts would receive Jumbo's skin or skeleton he did not say—perhaps it had yet to occur to him that he might have two Jumbos to dispose of. A year later he wrote to Spencer Baird: "my manager and self think Jumbo's skin or skeleton should go to your Institution, you taking your choice, and then the 'Barnum' Museum at Tufts College take the other. . . . P.S. We hope however that Jumbo may yet live many years, but think it as well to decide now as ever where he shall be distributed when he ceases to breathe."⁵⁹ Barnum believed his great trophy belonged in a national museum. He also thought it especially fitting that an animal that first achieved fame in Great Britain should find a home in an institution created with a bequest by a Briton, James Smithson.⁶⁰

By December 1884 it had been decided that the Smithsonian

would get the skeleton and Tufts the mounted hide.⁶¹ Though Barnum reaffirmed his commitment to both institutions over the years, his mind was not firmly settled on several scores. First, Barnum kept both museums waiting. The stuffed Jumbo had great value to the circus—Barnum estimated, "it is worth \$100,000 or more per year for exhibition in our show"—and neither museum could expect delivery so long as it brought in good money.⁶² Second, he entertained various business propositions that threatened to trump all promises. More than once, Barnum and his partners explored the possibility of selling the mounted elephant to buyers in London; one rumor suggested the British Museum (Natural History) might be interested.⁶³ As late as 1889, thought was given to creating a permanent museum in New York affiliated with the Greatest Show with Jumbo as a key exhibit.⁶⁴ And when Barnum was finally willing to part with skeleton and skin, he retained the right to reclaim them for further ventures. Indeed the circus borrowed both Jumbos for its London run in 1889, and no sooner was the mounted hide back at Tufts than Barnum wrote to Marshall, "glad you have Jumbo again. Perhaps he will remain always, but as he speaks all languages he may possibly in future years go around the world."⁶⁵ Lastly, by the mid-1880s, Barnum had developed competing loyalties to three museums—his museum at Tufts, the Smithsonian, and the AMNH in New York—and after Jumbo's death he wavered on which two would receive his prize objects, notwithstanding his stated commitments. Never was a gift more tentatively given.

In a confidential letter sent to Albert Bickmore at the AMNH

Moving Jumbo into Barnum Hall, 1889. Historical Materials Collection, Digital Collections and Archives, Tufts University.



two weeks after Jumbo's accident, Henry Ward wrote that, while the Smithsonian was in line to get the skeleton, Barnum had been, "sensibly affected by the call to put the stuffed Jumbo eventually in your great museum. It is possible—this is only my surmise,—that he wishes that he had promised to you before to Tufts College. He cannot now fairly change (and I think him a very fair man) without giving them a quid pro quo. Possibly he may be induced to do that."⁶⁶ Ward offered his help and he may well have lobbied Barnum on behalf of the New York museum before that time. In the previous year, the AMNH president, Morris Jesup, had appealed to Ward: "Can't you induce Barnum to give American Museum 'Jumbo'?"⁶⁷

As it happened, Barnum could not be induced to break his word to Tufts and in the spring of 1889 Jumbo's mounted hide was delivered to the Barnum Museum and installed in the vestibule next to the founder's bust. His massive size and rigid posture required the removal of the front steps and the doorframe to get him in; while the work was done, he was staged for photographs outside.⁶⁸ The complicated process was repeated when he went to London in the autumn, but upon his return to Tufts in 1890 he was permanently installed.

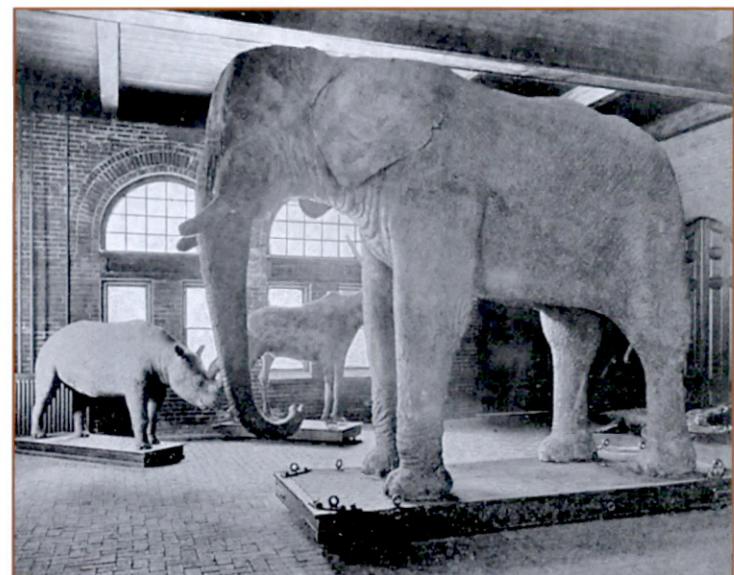
Barnum's commitment to the Smithsonian proved less secure. Despite frequent assertions that Jumbo belonged in Washington, the entangled dealings with Tufts caused a change of heart. His partners evidently favored New York over the capital and by the spring of 1887 Barnum was ready to go with the majority. In late April he wrote to Jesup that he and his partners had a "tacit understanding that you shall have the first chance for Jumbo's skeleton."⁶⁹ Soon thereafter he began sharing his views with relevant parties. In May he told John Marshall of pressure from the AMNH to donate specimens and added: "entre-nous the Smithsonian has behaved so shabbily I hope Jumbo's skeleton will go to the NY Institution."⁷⁰ In July, after the circus had passed through Rochester, Henry Ward informed Marshall that Barnum had called and expressed "grave doubt about sending the skeleton to Smithsonian."⁷¹ Finally in December, Barnum visited the AMNH and let it be known publicly

that the skeleton would not be going to Washington after all but rather to the New York museum.⁷² Jumbo went on display in New York in April and the exultant president of the museum invited Barnum to come and see it for himself: "I think you will be surprised & thoroughly pleased when you see his skeleton; it has been finely mounted, both as regards the body and the pedestal."⁷³ The skeleton accompanied the mounted hide to London in September but Barnum's partner, James Bailey, promised it would return by April, "possibly to remain at the American Museum forever."⁷⁴

Notwithstanding the loan to the AMNH in 1889, the Smithsonian remained confident Barnum would

keep his word and give the skeleton permanently to the National Museum. Hornaday had worked hard to keep Barnum and Tufts happy and clearly hoped earlier grievances would be forgotten. So, it seems, it came as an unwelcome surprise to learn in March 1890 that the skeleton would probably stay in New York after all. "During the last week I have been much disquieted—and so has Professor Goode," Hornaday wrote Barnum, "by a rumor that has reached us from New York to the effect that Jumbo's skeleton, which you promised us years ago, is 'positively to go to the American Museum of Natural History' at New York, to remain permanently, when the great show returns from Europe. Surely this is not true. What says the King of Showmen?"⁷⁵

Barnum replied elliptically, "I felt and still do that a great National Museum situated in the Nation's Capital is the most proper place



Jumbo in the Barnum Museum, c. 1930. Rollins Collection, Digital Collections and Archives, Tufts University.

Jumbo was the subject of many posters during his short career in America. This striking collage gathers together images of Jumbo ready to cross the Atlantic, giving rides to children in the London Zoo, and a banquet to mourn his departure from England. Howard Tibbals Collection, The Ringling Museum.

for Jumbo's skeleton,"⁷⁶ but this fell short of a promise to give and Hornaday correctly surmised Barnum's intent. He wrote to George Brown Goode that he was sure "the National Museum will never get Jumbo's skeleton" owing to frustrations generated by Tufts's "utterly insatiable" demands.⁷⁷ After Barnum's death in April 1891, the Smithsonian reviewed the relevant correspondence only to determine that the showman had been careful to hedge his offer with enough qualifications to deter efforts to make a legal claim on the skeleton.⁷⁸

The Barnum Museum: Later Years

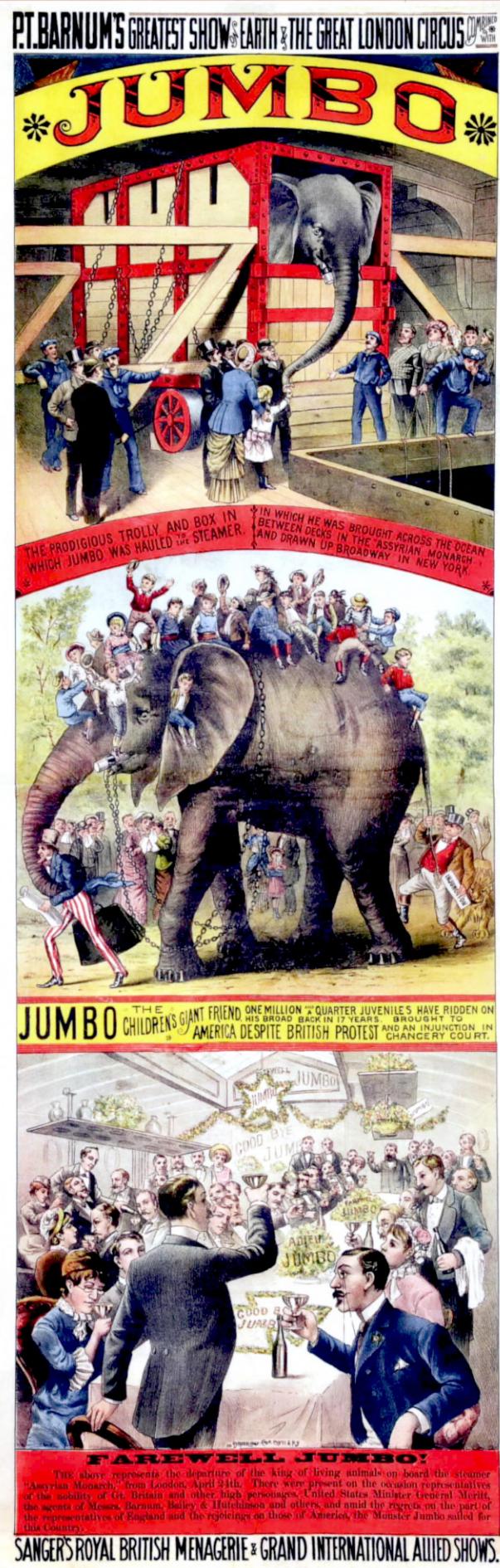
The Tufts museum continued to prosper after Barnum's death in 1891. Barnum gave the University a further \$40,000 to build two new wings on the Museum and new gifts were added to the collection. The triangular arrangement with Ward survived into the 1890s. Following Barnum's death, his partner, James A. Bailey, wanted to end the deal but was evidently talked into carrying on for a while longer by Marshall, and perhaps also by Ward who pointed out that it seemed a "great pity that the skins and skeletons" of lost animals "should be put to no use."⁷⁹ Not surprisingly, donations from the Smithsonian came to an end.

Over time, the collection of animal specimens aged and grew less useful to instruction in the life sciences. Marshall's retirement in 1898 slowed further expansion and his successors on the faculty came to the university with new and different intellectual interests. The Barnum Museum was completed on the cusp of a revolution in scientific inquiry that, in the words of historian Stephen Conn, "drew natural history into new areas of research, away from morphology and toward genetics, from whole organism biology into cellular biology," and consequently "from museum halls into university labs."⁸⁰ At the Tufts museum, the two new wings Barnum intended for further specimens were used instead for classrooms and laboratories.

Furthermore, as a museum display, the Tufts collection was gradually rendered old fashioned by the evolution in taxidermy practice from static single specimens to dynamic habitat groups and dioramas. In the 1880s, while still an apprentice under Ward, William Hornaday pioneered multi-figured groups in simulated environments that



Tufts students drop pennies in Jumbo's trunk for good luck, c. 1954. Melville Munro Collection, Digital Collections and Archives, Tufts University.



SANGER'S ROYAL BRITISH MENAGERIE & GRAND INTERNATIONAL ALLIED SHOWS.

recalled original habitats. Robert Schufeldt's government-sponsored *Scientific Taxidermy for Museums* (1899) commended the trend for creating "the look of life."⁸¹ Hornaday's fellow apprentice at Ward's, Carl Akeley, would set a new standard of verisimilitude and shift the emphasis in museum displays definitively from taxonomy to animal behavior and ecology in his celebrated hall of African mammals at the AMNH, completed in 1936 after his death and named after him.⁸² The remarkable centerpiece of a travelling herd of elephants shows how far he had brought the art of taxidermy since his early work on Jumbo in 1885.

In 1938 Russell Carpenter joined the biology faculty and took over the Museum. The following year he decided to clear the building of its animal collection and re-design the vestibule as a shrine to Barnum and Jumbo. The Museum had been closed to the public for some years and he believed the space could be more effectively utilized. "Fifty years of sunlight, moths and the ravages of time have not dealt too kindly with some of the specimens," he wrote. "The lions have faded to a tawdry blondness, the zebra has stripes only on his shady side, and the giraffe split his seams some time ago. As a collection for public exhibition, it served its purpose for many years but I feel that its usefulness has passed."⁸³

As the animal specimens declined in value, Jumbo's iconic stature steadily grew. Of course, Jumbo had always been more than just another animal specimen. From the first, he was set apart in the entrance as a popular attraction and showpiece.⁸⁴ Carpenter wrote to Barnum's eldest grandson: "I propose to move everything except Jumbo and the bust of Mr. Barnum, re-decorate and furnish the room attractively . . . I want to make this room a permanent memorial to P. T. Barnum as a notable figure in American life and finance and as a benefactor of Tufts College."⁸⁵ The Barnum Museum became Barnum Hall, Jumbo was restored, and freed of association with other natural history exhibits he gained a stronger profile as the "insignia and symbol of Tufts," according to Carpenter.⁸⁶ While the skeleton at the AMNH retained value as a type specimen of the African bush elephant (*Loxodonta Africana rothschildi*), the mounted Jumbo at Tufts became the beloved companion of undergraduates, who posed with him for photographs and dropped pennies in his trunk for good luck in exams.

Jumbo stood tall on the Tufts campus until a fire destroyed the Barnum building and its contents on an April night in 1975. The morning after the fire, an employee entered the smoldering ruins and swept Jumbo's ashes into an empty peanut butter jar. Today, those ashes, still housed in their makeshift urn, are brought out to inspire the college athletic teams that bear his name.

Jumbo enjoyed (endured) a remarkable life and afterlife, which took him from the savannahs of East Africa to captivity and fame in the zoos of Paris and London and Barnum's peripatetic American circus, a fatal train accident in Canada, and finally to posthumous celebrity as museum piece, college mascot, and byword for anything of great size. Perhaps no animal illustrates more dramatically the range of "journeys or passages that some wild animals make between the contested terrain of 'nature' and 'culture'—from those spaces and conditions in which their lives are largely their own concerns and lived apart from us, to the differently configured spaces and conditions that arise when we . . . bring them out of their spaces and into our human 'cultural' world."⁸⁷

I would like to thank Christa Clarke, Neil Harris and the anonymous referee for this journal for their helpful comments on earlier drafts of this paper. BW



In contrast to the trade cards published by J. H. Bufford's Sons, those printed by Buek and Lindner in New York anthropomorphized Jumbo by giving him human characteristics and abilities, in this case as a solo violinist. Pfening Archives.

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This paper originally appeared in the Journal of the History of Collections, Vol. 24 No. 1, 2012, pages 45-62 by permission of Oxford University Press.

Endnotes

1. For an overview of American university natural history museums, see Sally Gregory Kohlstedt, "Museums on Campus: A Tradition of Inquiry and Teaching," in Ronald Rainger, Keith R. Benson and Jane Maienschein (eds.), *The American Development of Biology* (Philadelphia, 1988), pp. 15-47. Kohlstedt does not include Tufts in her appendix: "Buildings established for scientific study on selected campuses, 1871-1910."
2. Barnum has been well served by two modern biographies: Neil Harris, *Humbug: The Art of P. T. Barnum* (Chicago, 1973); A. H. Saxon, *P. T. Barnum The Legend and the Man* (New York, 1989).
3. Quoted in Russell E. Miller, *Light on the Hill: A History of Tufts College 1852-1952* (Boston, 1966), p. 143.
4. P. T. Barnum to Elmer Capen, October 10, 1883. Tufts University Archives [hereafter TUA], MS 2 Box 001, folder 1:1 (2/4). Barnum told Capen that he recently arrived home from travels to find "nearly a peck of begging letters" and had also drawn attention from St Lawrence University, another Unitarian Universalist institution.
5. Barnum to Elmer Capen, May 3, 1883. TUA, MS 2 Box 001, folder 1:1 (2/4).
6. Barnum to Elmer Capen, May 6, 1883. TUA, MS 2 Box 001, folder 1:1 (2/4). This and some other letters quoted in this article are reproduced in A. H. Saxon (ed.), *Selected Letters of P. T. Barnum* (New York, 1983), p. 236.
7. *Ibid.*
8. Barnum to Elmer Capen, June 12, 1884. TUA, MS 2 Box 001, 1:1 [2/4].
9. Lynn Barber, *The Heyday of Natural History 1820-1870* (New York, 1980).
10. P. T. Barnum, *Struggles and Triumphs: or, The Life of P. T. Barnum*, ed. George S. Bryan (New York, 1927), vol. II, p. 794.
11. For an overview of his contributions to natural history and involvement with museums, see John Richards Betts, "P. T. Barnum and the Popularization of Natural History," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 20 no. 3 (1959), pp. 353-68.
12. Barnum to William T. Hornaday, April 16, 1890, Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, RU 192, Box 637.
13. Barnum to Elmer Capen, June 12, 1884. TUA, MS 2 Box 001 1:1 [2/4].
14. *Ibid.* For full text, see Saxon, *op. cit.* (note 6), pp. 252-4.
15. *Tuftonian* 10 no. 1 (1884), p. 6. The magazine failed to note that the design was much indebted to the Boston Society of Natural History, which had opened in 1864. See Sally Gregory Kohlstedt and Paul Brinkman, "Framing Nature: the Formative Years of Natural History Museum Development in the United States," in Alan Leviton and Michele Aldrich (eds.), *Museums and other Institutions of Natural History: Past, Present, and Future*, Proceedings of the California Academy of Sciences 55 Supplement 1 (2004), pp. 7-33.



JUMBO MUST GO, BECAUSE DRAWN BY WILLIMANTIC THREAD!

Many consumer goods companies featured Jumbo in their advertising. This trade card, printed by Forbes Lithograph in Boston, probably in 1882, cleverly uses Jumbo to emphasize the strength of its thread. Pfening Archives.

16. Barnum to Elmer Capen, June 13, 1884. TUA, MS 2 Box 001, 1:1 [2/4]. For full text, see Saxon, *op. cit.* (note 6), pp. 252–4. Keith Benson points out that academic natural history, congruent with Barnum's own views, "often made a more overt connection between the study of the wondrous artifacts in nature and the American version of natural theology; that is, one studied nature to observe signs of a beneficent creator who designed the harmonious natural world." Keith R. Benson, "From Museum Research to Laboratory Research: the Transformation of Natural History into Academic Biology," in Rainger, Benson and Maienschein, *op. cit.* (note 1), p. 56.

17. Barnum to Elmer Capen, July 1, 1883. TUA, MS 2 Box 001, 1:1 [2/4]: "I am determined you shall have 'Jumbo' & such other specimens as I can spare—when you get the building ready—and when Jumbo dies."

18. On Ward, see Sally Gregory Kohlstedt, "Henry A. Ward: the Merchant Naturalist and American Museum Development," *Journal of the Society for the Bibliography of Natural History* 9 no. 4 (1980), pp. 647–61. Further facts about his life are provided by: Robert G. Koch, "Henry A. Ward," *Crooked Lake Review* (December 1992). <http://crookedlakereview.com/articles/34_66/57de1992/57koch.html>.

19. Quoted by Kohlstedt, *op. cit.* (note 18), p. 647.

20. Barnum to Elmer Capen, November 11, 1883. Henry Ward Papers. University of Rochester Library [hereafter URL].

21. Henry Ward to John Marshall, November 16, 1883. TUA, MS 2 Box 001, 1:12.

22. *Ibid.*

23. Henry Ward to Barnum, November 18, 1883. TUA, MS 2 Box 001, 1:7. The Tufts archives has two lists of specimens supplied by Ward in 1884, listing some 250 animals and 150 shells and pieces of coral. TUA, MS 2 Box 2, folder 7.

24. Henry Ward to John Marshall, January 1 and February 12, 1886. TUA, MS 2 Box 001, 1:12.

25. Barnum to Elmer Capen, February 12, 1884. TUA, MS 2 Box 001, 1:1 [2/4]; Barnum to John Marshall, July 19, 1887. TUA, MS 2 Box 001, 1:1 [3/4]. Barnum's suspicions are hard to justify in view of the fact that Ward twice went bankrupt and typically sold close to dealer costs and was often bargained lower; see Kohlstedt, *op. cit.* (note 18), p. 655.

26. Barnum to Elmer Capen, November 20, 1885. TUA, MS 2 Box 001, 1:1 [3/4].

27. Barnum to Elmer Capen, January 27, 1887. TUA, MS 2 Box 001, 1:1 [3/4].

28. Barnum to John Marshall, January 15, 1887; January 19, 1887. TUA, MS 2 Box 001, 1:1 [3/4].

29. 1886 inventory of animals received from Barnum. TUA, MS 2 Box 002, folder 6. The Museum continued to receive gifts from other donors as well. Some of these gifts were sizeable, including a large set of stuffed birds and animals from the Lady Members of the 1st Universalist Church of Boston in 1888. After 1886 the Museum presented separate annual reports, complete with yearly gifts, as appendices to the President's published annual reports.

30. *Annual Report of the President of Tufts College, 1893-94* (Boston, 1894), p. 63. Marshall voiced his concerns from the outset, noting that Barnum's first offerings were "unnecessarily strong in the monkey, bat and anteater families" and hoping in time "to purchase what other things are more needed just now for purposes of instruction." John Marshall to Henry A. Ward, November 21, 1883. Ward Papers, URL.

31. Henry A. Ward to Barnum, May 15, 1887. TUA, MS 2 Box 001, 1:13. Ward also remarked that the vertebrate collection "takes rank with the best museums in the

country."

32. John Marshall to Henry A. Ward, January 4, 1887. Ward Papers, URL.

33. Barnum to Elmer Capen, March 21, 1884. TUA, MS 2 Box 001, 1:1 [2/4].

34. Spencer F. Baird to Barnum, June 23, 1884. TUA, MS 2 Box 001, 1:1 [1/4].

35. Spencer F. Baird to Barnum, April 14, 1885. TUA, MS 2 Box 004, folder 19.

36. Barnum to Spencer F. Baird, April 20, 1885. Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington [hereafter SIA], RU 192 Box 637. Barnum further noted that Baird's predecessor, Joseph Henry, had offered to supply Barnum's American Museum with specimen duplicates, recognizing it as "a scientific institution." He hoped that offer might now be extended to Tufts.

37. Barnum to Elmer Capen, October 30, 1885. TUA, MS 2 Box 001, 1:1 [2/4]: Baird "feels indebted to me—and especially as he is to have skeleton of Jumbo." *The Annual Report of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution* (Washington, 1886), p. 24, notes that "For a number of years the Institution has been indebted to the proprietors of the menageries of the country for the contribution of animals," the most important being that of "Messrs. Barnum, Bailey, and Hutchinson." The Smithsonian archives also has a list of animals presented by Barnum in 1884-5, which includes baboons and other monkeys; an Indian elephant, leopard, and cheetah; a llama, zebra, kangaroo, and a few antelope. RU 192, Box 637.

38. John Marshall to Barnum, April 16, 1888. TUA, MS 2 Box 001, 1:19. It is evident from correspondence that Ward had also complained about Baird and the Smithsonian. John Marshall to Henry A. Ward, December 28, 1885. Ward Papers, URL.

39. Barnum to Elmer Capen, November 20, 1885. TUA, MS 2 Box 001, 1:1 [3/4].

40. Barnum to John Marshall, February 3, 1886. TUA, MS 2 Box 001, 1:1 [3/4]; Barnum told Marshall he expected "favorable results" from his intervention. In March, Marshall sent Barnum a list of desiderata, mostly East Coast invertebrates "which would be most valuable for purposes of instruction." John Marshall to Barnum, March 13, 1886. SIA, RU 192, Box 637.

41. John Marshall to Barnum, April 16, 1888. TUA, MS 2 Box 001, 1:9.

42. *Ibid.*

43. William T. Hornaday to Barnum, May 5, 1888. SIA, RU 192, Box 637. An earlier letter from Hornaday, dated March 31, 1888, stated: "I am really shocked at the discovery that you have a feeling that we are disposed to refuse duplicates to the Barnum Museum at Tufts. If this is true, 'some one has blundered,' and I wish to know all about it. . . . The officers of this Institution have by no means forgotten the many & valuable favors we have received from you." RU 192, Box 637. A subsequent letter from Hornaday of April 29, 1888 details the measures he had taken to fill Marshall's order, expressing regret if offence had been caused. Five days earlier, Goode had told Hornaday that the Smithsonian would honor the arrangement between Baird and Barnum to "give a considerable amount of material in exchange to the Barnum Museum of Tufts College." George Brown Goode to William Hornaday, April 24, 1888. TUA, MS 2 Box 002, folder 1.

44. John Marshall to George Brown Goode, August 12, 1888. SIA, RU 189, Box 79, folder 1.

45. William Hornaday to George Brown Goode, August 16, 1888. SIA, RU 189, Box 79, folder 1. Hornaday included a draft of an angry letter which he suggested Goode should send to Marshall. The letter Goode did send Marshall was a good deal tamer. Perhaps Marshall felt bad for appearing ungrateful, for Barnum wrote to Hornaday on August 24, 1888: "Prof. Marshall writes me in great ecstasy over the beautiful and useful presents which Secretary Goode and yourself have graciously sent to the Barnum Museum." SIA, RU 192, Box 637.

46. John Marshall to Barnum, April 24, 1889; Barnum to William Hornaday, April 27, 1889. SIA, RU 192, Box 637. Marshall wrote to Barnum that Tufts would like casts of Assyrian antiquities, duplicates of the "fine invertebrates collected by the Albatross," and "a set of good fossils and rocks collected & determined by the U.S. Geological Society." He complained that the plants received in 1888 were hastily prepared, the Indian artifacts duplicates of what they already had, and the set of rocks and minerals "from the Territories" received earlier from Washington "very poor." He added: "Prof. Hornaday knows perfectly well what else is needed."

47. William Hornaday to Barnum, May 6, 1889. TUA, MS 2 Box 001, 1:1 [3/4].

48. William Hornaday to Barnum, March 29, 1890. TUA, MS 2 Box 001, 3:4. A list of gifts received is included in the *Annual Report of the President of Tufts College, 1889-90* (Boston, 1890), pp. 37-8.

49. Barnum to William Hornaday, May 20, 1890. SIA, RU 192, Box 637.

50. Barnum to William Hornaday, April 16, 1890. SIA, RU 192, Box 637.

51. For the story of Jumbo, see Paul Chambers, *Jumbo The Greatest Elephant in the World* (Hanover, NH, 2008); W. P. Jolly, *Jumbo* (London, 1976).

52. Barnum to Henry A. Ward, October 9, 1883. Ward Papers, URL.

53. Henry A. Ward to John Marshall, August 29, 1885. TUA, MS 2 Box 001, 1:12.

54. Barnum to Henry A. Ward, September 17, 1885. Ward Papers, URL. The idea of preparing both skin and skeleton for exhibition evidently came from Barnum's

associates, see Saxon, *op. cit.* (note 2), p. 299.

55. Barnum to Henry A. Ward, September 26, 1885. Ward Papers, URL.

56. On the idealizing function of taxidermy, see Hanna Rose Shell, "Skin Deep: Taxidermy, Embodiment, and Extinction in W. T. Hornaday's Buffalo Group," in Leviton and Aldrich, *op. cit.* (note 15), pp. 88-112.

57. Before and after his death, there were conflicting reports about Jumbo's height, but it seems he stood just under 11 feet. Mounted on his pedestal by Ward he measured 11 feet 8½ inches. See Walter Guest Kellogg, "How Big Was Jumbo?", *Circus Scrap Book* (April 1932) pp. 3-7.

58. Barnum to Elmer Caper, July 1 and July 8, 1883. TUA, MS 2 Box 001, 1:1 [1/4]. See note 17 above.

59. Barnum to Spencer F. Baird, June 21, 1884. SIA, RU 192, Box 637.

60. In June of 1882, while in discussions with Baird about the creation of a national zoo in Washington, Barnum offered to lend Jumbo occasionally. Barnum to Spencer F. Baird, June 10, 1882. SIA, RU 7050, Box 1, Barnum file.

61. Barnum to Spencer F. Baird, December 9, 1884. SIA, RU 192, Box 637.

62. Barnum to Morris K. Jesup, September 21, 1885. American Museum of Natural History (hereafter AMNH), Central Archives, Administrative Files.

63. Barnum to Spencer F. Baird, September 27, 1885: "We have been called from London for a price for skin and skeleton, by a Naturalist there. My partners think it is for the British Museum and they evidently have some idea that the skeleton may be sold for a large price when its public exhibition is finished in our show." SIA, RU 192, Box 637; Barnum to John Marshall, December 12, 1889: "We came very near selling Jumbo here [in London] but the chances are he will get back to the College in the spring." TUA, MS 2 Box 001, 1:1 [3/4].

64. Barnum to John Marshall, April 6, 1889. TUA, MS 2 Box 001, 1:1 [3/4]: "it grows more and more probable that before next Christmas we shall open a Museum here, wherein we must place the skin and skeleton of Jumbo. This I cannot help for in that case the greater benefit will swallow the smaller one."

65. Barnum to John Marshall, March 26, 1890. TUA, MS 2 Box 001, 1:1 [3/4].

66. Henry A. Ward to Albert Bickmore, October 2, 1885. AMNH, Central Archives, Administrative Files.

67. Morris K. Jesup to Henry A. Ward, September 19, 1884. Ward Papers, URL.

68. Getting Jumbo into the museum at Tufts required extraordinary effort. The 1,500-pound stuffed hide was first carried by horse-drawn cart from the local railway station but then hauled up the hill by some fifty Tufts professors and students and a host of neighbourhood boys. Jumbo was too big to fit through the door, requiring the removal of the stone steps, some of the brick flooring, and the wooden door frame. TUA, MS 2, Box 4, folders 1, 11.

Correspondence between Henry Ward and John Marshall in October 1885 contains further details about maneuvering Jumbo into the museum. Ward Papers, URL.

69. Saxon, *op. cit.* (note 6), p. 286.

70. Barnum to John Marshall, May 6, 1887. TUA, MS 2 Box 001, 1:1 [3/4].

71. Henry A. Ward to John Marshall, July 14, 1887. TUA, MS 2 Box 001, 1:12.

72. J. A. Allen to Morris K. Jesup, December 14, 1887. AMNH, Central Archives, Administrative Files.

73. Morris K. Jesup to Barnum, April 20, 1889. AMNH, Central Archives, Letterpress Book 9, pp. 180-82. In the letter, Jesup acknowledged that Jumbo was on loan and would place a notice to that effect on the pedestal, but hoped "such an interesting subject will

not be required to be removed by you for a very long time to come." Barnum had come to the museum in March to confirm loan details; Barnum to Morris K. Jesup, March 18, 1889. AMNH, Central Archives, Administrative Files.

74. James Bailey to Jennes Richardson, telegram, September 7, 1889. AMNH Central Archives, Administrative Files.

75. William Hornaday to Barnum, March 29, 1890. TUA, MS 2 Box 001, 1:1 [3/4].

76. Barnum to William Hornaday, April 16, 1890. SIA, RU 192, Box 637.

77. William Hornaday to George Brown Goode, April 17, 1890. SIA, RU 192, Box 637. The memo is marked "R.I.P." In a follow-up memo of June 11, 1890, Hornaday noted: "Evidently the Museum will never get Jumbo's skeleton,

notwithstanding Mr. Barnum's promises in the matter."

78. "Memorandum to Mr. Goode," April 14, 1891. SIA, RU 192, Box 637. The memo cites a letter of September 27, 1885 in which Barnum told Baird: "It is my full intention that the Smithsonian shall receive Jumbo's skeleton in due time as a gift. I may not perhaps be able to carry it out—for I don't own quite half of the show & I shall have one or two new partners."

79. Frank Ward to John Marshall, March 7, 1892. TUA, MS 2 Box 001, 1:13.

No specimens from Ward's are listed after 1897. In 1901-2 the Barnum Museum welcomed a donation of deceased animals from Bostock's Animal Arena, which were prepared for exhibition by a janitor who doubled as a taxidermist. *Annual Report of the President of Tufts College, 1901-1902* (Boston, 1902).

80. Stephen Conn, *Museums and American Intellectual Life, 1876-1926* (Chicago, 1998), pp. 44, 65. Also Keith Benson: "beginning in the 1860s and continuing through the end of the century, biology moved beyond the museum. First into nature . . . and then into the university laboratory." Benson, *op. cit.* (note 16), p. 77.

81. Quoted by Shell, *op. cit.* (note 56), p. 90. On taxidermy also see, Rachel Poliquin, "The Matter and Meaning of Museum Taxidermy," in "Constructing Nature Under Glass," in Samuel J. M. Alberti and Christopher Whitehead (eds.), *Museum and Society* 6 no. 2 (2008), pp. 123-34.

82. See Stephen Christopher Quinn, *Windows on Nature. The Great Habitat Dioramas of the American Museum of Natural History* (New York, 2006).

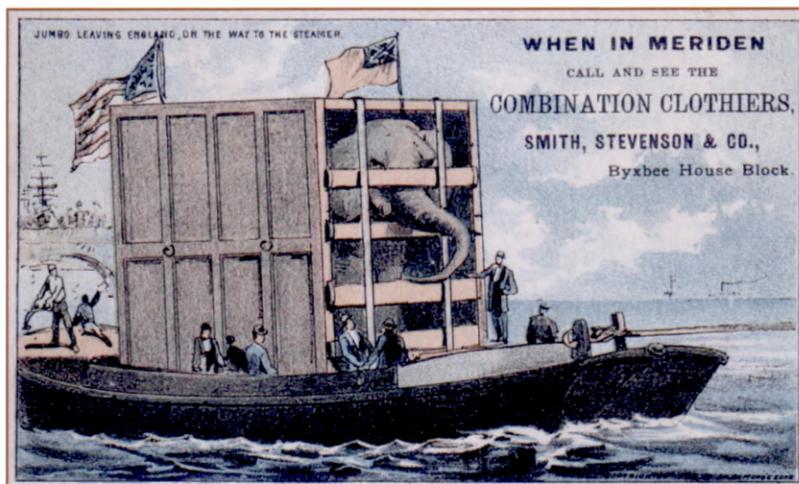
83. Russell Carpenter to C. Barnum Seeley, July 21, 1939. TUA, MS 2, Box 2, folder 3. Also Russell Carpenter to Ward Cruickshank, March 19, 1962. TUA, MS 2, Box 2, folder 3, in which Carpenter recalls the sad state of the animals when he arrived. It was decided that the Harvard museum nearby could satisfy student needs, as Spencer Baird had suggested in the beginning. Some of the animals were sent to decorate Perry's Tropical Nut Houses of Belfast, Maine and Seabrook, New Hampshire in 1949; others were used as landfill in construction of college playing fields.

84. Two weeks before Jumbo died, John Marshall had written to Henry Ward: "I should not consider the Barnum Museum complete without this noble animal. It would be the greatest ornament that we could place in the vestibule near Mr. Barnum's bust." John Marshall to Henry A. Ward, September 1, 1885. Ward Papers, URL.

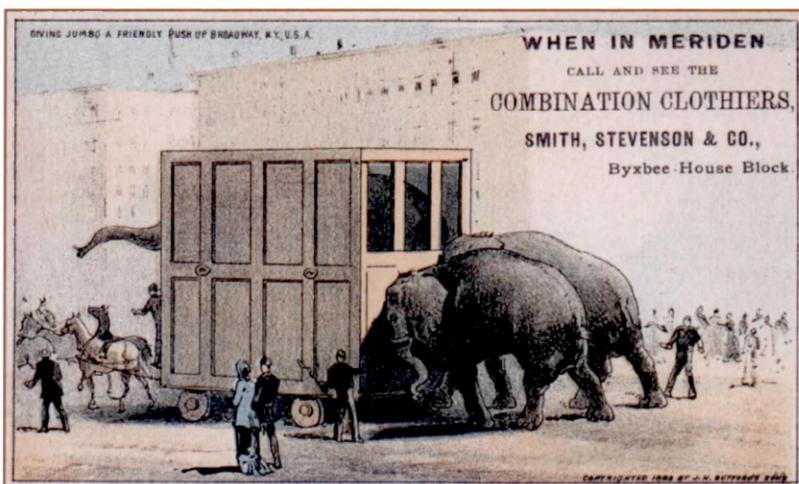
85. Russell Carpenter to C. Barnum Seeley, July 21, 1939. TUA, MS 2, Box 2, folder 3.

86. *Ibid.*

87. Garry Marvin, "Perpetuating Polar Bears: the Cultural Life of Dead Animals," in Bryndis Snaebjornsdottir and Mark Wilson (eds.), *nanoq: flatout and bluesome. A Cultural Life of Polar Bears* (London, 2006), p. 157.



This 1882 trade card, part of the set printed by J. H. Bufford's Sons Lithographers in Boston, shows Jumbo being ferried to the steamship Assyrian Monarch to begin his journey to America. Pfening Archives.



Another card from the 1882 J. H. Bufford's Sons series, this one captioned, "Giving Jumbo a Friendly Push Up Broadway, N.Y., U.S.A." Jumbo debuted in America on April 10, 1882. Pfening Archives.

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